

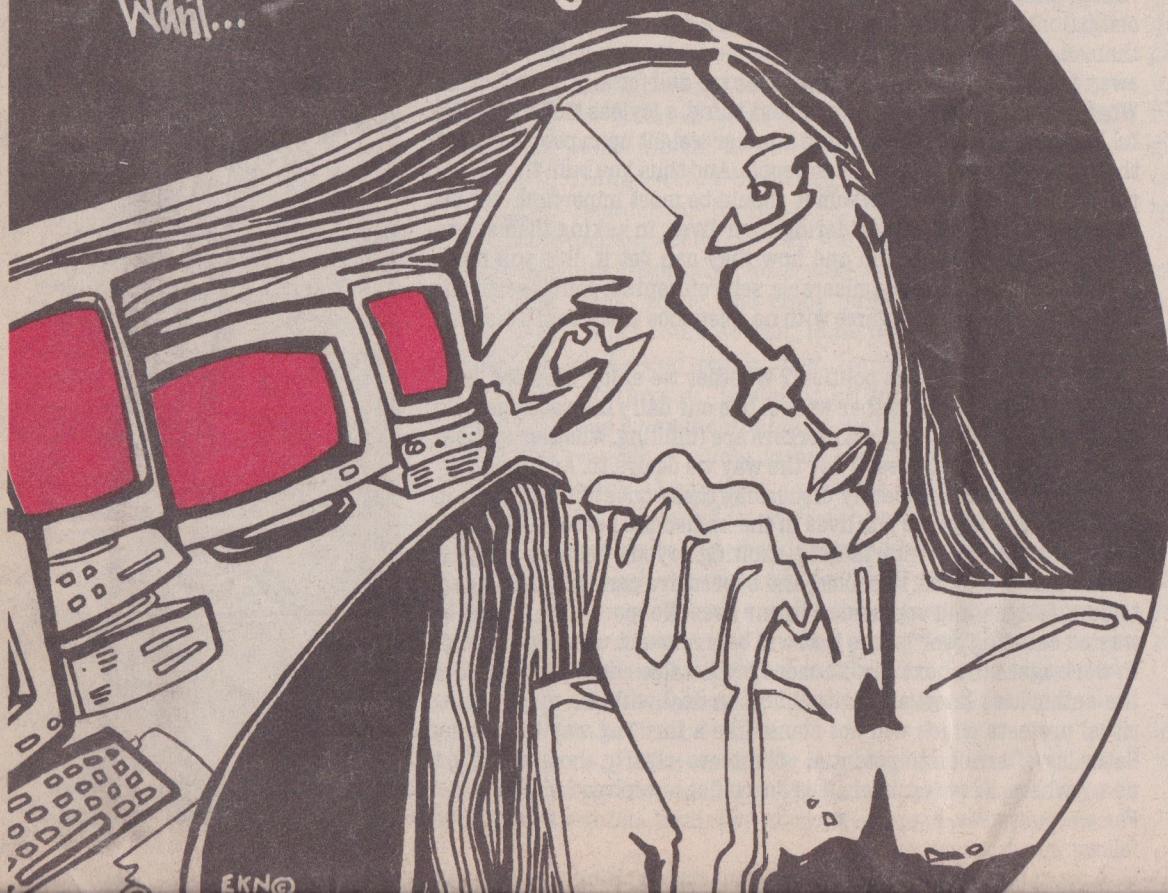
The Propaganda of Desire

**FREE**

second communiqué  
22 months and counting  
a mouthpiece of the  
CrimethInc.  
propaganda press



i wonder what it would be like  
to live the life i really  
want...



# Harbinger:

*Leaving the 20th Century*

# How to get what you want.

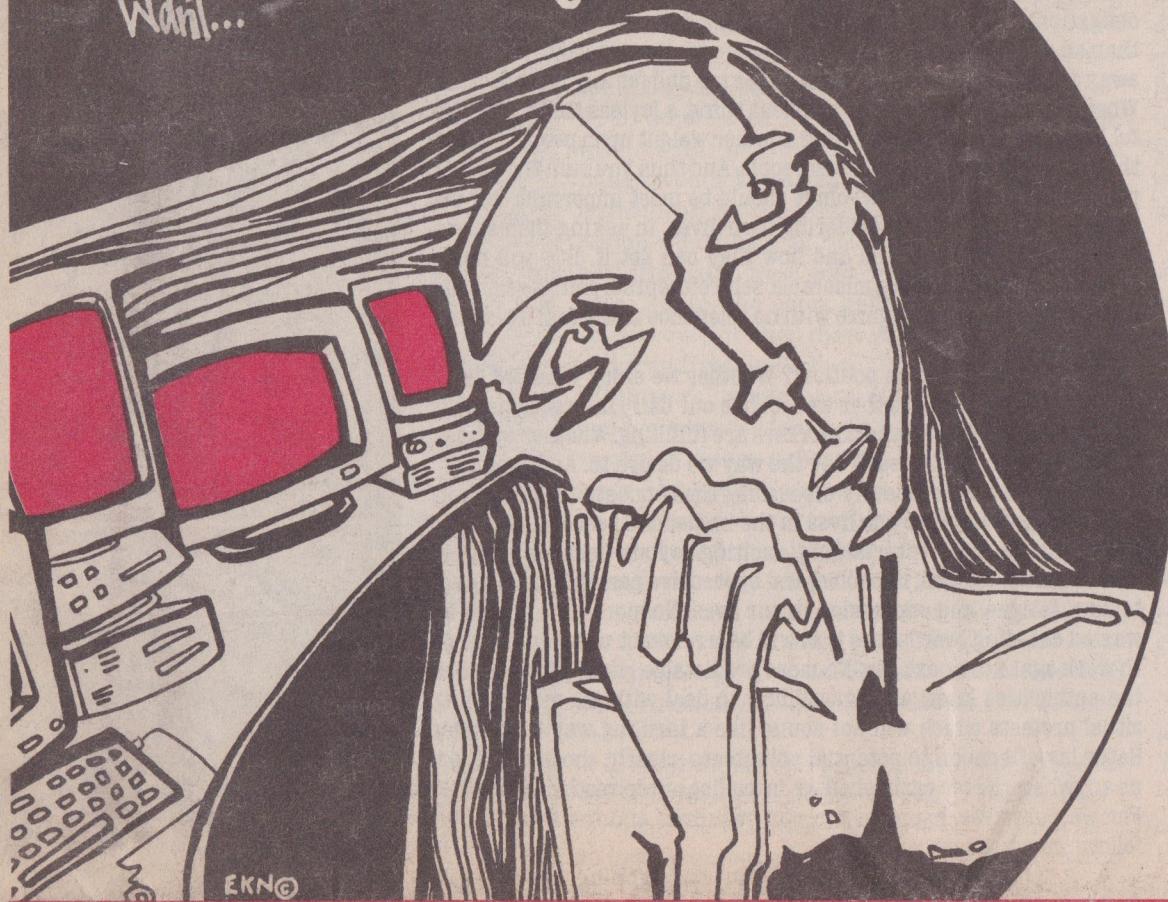
## What do you want most in all the world?

More money, a new car stereo, a vacation? To lose ten pounds, to get home from work in time to see your favorite sitcom?

Or is it something more than that, something harder to define?

Maybe you've given up on ever realizing your true dreams, and you settle for smaller things because they, at least, seem possible. Maybe it never occurred to you to ask yourself if the goals you've been pursuing really are what you want most. Perhaps, like many people, you feel as if you are being compelled to do things, as if your life is not your own. How often do you feel like that?

i wonder what it would be like  
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Here's a wild idea: everything you do in your life, you should do because you want to do it, more than anything else in the world. And when you make plans, you should aim for the most exciting, glorious life you could imagine, not just for conventional "success" or "security," the consolation prizes of the tired and hopeless. What could be more radical than choosing your actions according to how enjoyable they are, rather than how moral, how responsible, how socially acceptable they seem? And yet, what else really makes sense? Haven't we tried serving every master but our own wishes, fighting for

world that constructs and affects you--and for this, you will need everyone else's help. If we want to pursue happiness, we should take responsibility for the world we are creating, and together make sure that it will be one that creates happiness in us.

But won't doing whatever we

want put us against each other? No, it will

# How to get what you want.

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## Have you ever made love and it felt so good it seemed dangerous?

Being in love means really wanting to live in a different world: a more exciting world, a more beautiful world, a more joyous, carefree world. **A world where everything matters and nothing is ever, ever dull.**

## Why shouldn't we start to build that world right here, today?

Think back to the most important day of your life, the day you first discovered love or music or adventure... when a thousand new doors opened, and the world seemed bigger than it ever had before, and sud-

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Pursuing your desires doesn't just mean blindly following your impulses wherever they lead. It means, first, discovering what you *really* want: weeding through your desires and deciding which are real and which are illusory, which are stronger and which are weaker, which will bring you the most happiness in the end. It means reconstructing yourself and your life so that you can pursue as many of your desires as possible (since there is no guarantee that all of them can be simultaneously achieved--most of us find ourselves always pulled in different directions by competing impulses and longings); it means prioritizing and analyzing your desires themselves. Maybe what you want is to feel better about yourself: is getting your nails done the answer, or could that impulse be a part of your insecurities? Perhaps you love the countryside; is it enough for you to buy a few acres of it and enjoy that, while the rest of the world is slowly wrapped in concrete?

Pursuing your desires also means reconstructing our society. Each of us is the product of the world we live in; and yet, this world is itself the product of our own efforts. To reconstruct yourself and your life, you must reconstruct the

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But won't doing whatever we want pit us against each other? No--it will force us to work together. For the greatest, most ambitious endeavors cannot be carried through alone; they require the participation of other people, even of whole societies. Most of us want community, friendship, to feel safe and free with others more than almost anything else; we need each other to achieve all these things. To create a community in which each of us can live life to the fullest, we must make it possible for all of us to pursue our dreams and be free and creative. Otherwise we're cheating ourselves of each other's potential, as well as our own. That's the secret that the very *unambitious* "me generation" missed: past a certain point, greed and generosity intersect.

And yes, this will be hard, especially at first. Nothing is more difficult than pushing to always be honest with yourself, demanding the most from yourself and from every day of your life. It will put us at odds with the existing order, that's for sure. But it's a struggle worth fighting if any is! A contest of the vast potential that each of us has, and the vaster potential that we all could have together, against everything in this world that is pointless, petty, ugly...

The alternative, of course, is to settle for what we have today, and never question whether there could be more to life.

Think back to the most important day of your life, the day you first discovered love or music or adventure... when a thousand new doors opened, and the world seemed bigger than it ever had before, and suddenly everything was possible.

Why can't *every* day feel like that?

Well, for one thing, we don't exactly live in a society that is designed to help us discern and pursue our hearts' desires, do we? Whatever the rhetoric about "freedom and the pursuit of happiness" may suggest, our society is filled to the point of absurdity with distractions and restrictions. We're all so busy struggling to keep up that it's hard to even remember our dreams, let alone chase after them. And each of us *feels* so powerless that it's equally hard to keep in mind that this world we live in is entirely the result of our own efforts: it is *our* work that has made it this way. Our species has completely transformed the planet. Is *this* the best of all possible worlds we have built?

If it's not, why don't we stop building it, and invent new ways of living and working together--so we can construct another, better world, that will be more pleasurable for all of us! For what should we work towards, if not pleasure and joy?

Ultimately, happiness doesn't come from just getting what you want and having it, but rather from the process of seeking it--from the free pursuit of your desires and ambitions. It's that feeling of excitement and weightlessness you experience when you feel free to do and be whatever you want, when life becomes a joyous, ever-changing dance. After centuries of dull servitude to responsibility, propriety, and necessity, we're not used to expressing and following our dreams--the time has come to learn how.

# Face it, your politics are boring as fuck.

You know it's true. Otherwise, why does everyone cringe when you say the word? Why has attendance at your anarcho-communist theory discussion group meetings fallen to an all-time low? Why has the oppressed proletariat not come to its senses and joined you in your fight for world liberation?

Perhaps, after years of struggling to educate them about their victimhood, you have come to blame them for their condition. They must want to be ground under the heel of capitalist imperialism; otherwise, why do they show no interest in your political causes? Why haven't they joined you yet in chaining yourself to mahogany furniture, chanting slogans at carefully planned and orchestrated protests, and frequenting anarchist bookshops? Why haven't they sat down and learned all the terminology necessary for a genuine understanding of the complexities of Marxist economic theory?

The truth is, your politics are boring to them because they really are irrelevant. They know that your antiquated styles of protest—your marches, hand held signs, and gatherings—are now powerless to effect real change because they have become such a predictable part of the status quo. They know that your post-Marxist jargon is off-putting because it really is a language of mere academic dispute, not a weapon capable of undermining systems of control. They know that your infighting, your splinter groups and endless quarrels over ephemeral theories can never effect any real change in the world they experience from day to day. They know that no matter who is in office, what laws are on the books, what "ism's" the intellectuals march under, the content of their lives will remain the same. They—we—know that our boredom is proof that these "politics" are not the key to any real transformation of life. For our lives are boring enough already!

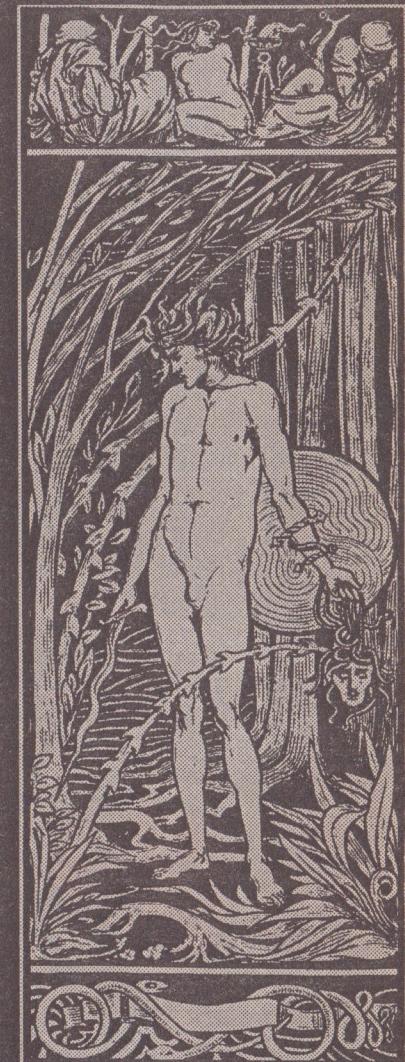
And you know it too. For how many of you is politics a *responsibility*? Something you engage in because you feel you *should*, when in your heart of hearts there are a million things you would rather be doing? Your volunteer work—is it your most favorite pastime, or do you do it out of a sense of obligation? Why do you think it is so hard to motivate others to volunteer as you do? Could it be that it is, above all, a feeling of *guilt* that drives you to fulfill your "duty" to be politically active? Perhaps you spice up your "work" by trying (consciously or not) to get in trouble with the authorities, to get arrested: not because it will practically serve your cause, but to make things more exciting, to recapture a little of the romance of turbulent times now long past. Have you ever felt that you were participating in a ritual, a long-established tradition of fringe protest, that really

When you separate politics from the immediate, everyday experiences of individual men and women, it becomes completely irrelevant. Indeed, it becomes the private domain of wealthy, comfortable intellectuals, who can trouble themselves with such dreary, theoretical things. When you involve yourself in politics out of a sense of obligation, and make political action into a dull responsibility rather than an exciting game that is worthwhile for its own sake, you scare away people whose lives are already far too dull for any more tedium. When you make politics into a lifeless thing, a joyless thing, a dreadful responsibility, it becomes just another weight upon people, rather than a means to lift weight from people. And thus you ruin the idea of politics for the people to whom it should be most important. For everyone has a stake in considering their lives, in asking themselves what they want out of life and how they can get it. But you make politics look to them like a miserable, self-referential, pointless middle class/bohemian game, a game with no relevance to the real lives they are living out.

What should be political? Whether we enjoy what we do to get food and shelter. Whether we feel like our daily interactions with our friends, neighbors, and coworkers are fulfilling. Whether we have the opportunity to live each day the way we desire to. And "politics" should consist not of merely *discussing* these questions, but of acting directly to improve our lives in the immediate present. Acting in a way that is itself entertaining, exciting, joyous—because political action that is tedious, tiresome, and oppressive can only perpetuate tedium, fatigue, and oppression in our lives. No more time should be wasted debating over issues that will be irrelevant when we must go to work again the next day. No more predictable ritual protests that the authorities know all too well how to deal with; no more boring ritual protests which will not sound like a thrilling way to spend a Saturday afternoon to potential volunteers—clearly, those won't get us anywhere. Never again shall we "sacrifice ourselves for the cause." For we *ourselves*, happiness in our own lives and the lives of our fellows, must be our cause!

After we make politics relevant and exciting, the rest will

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second communiqué



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It's no wonder that no one has joined you in your political endeavors. Perhaps you tell yourself that it's tough, thankless work, but somebody's got to do it. The answer is, well, NO.

You actually do us all a real disservice with your tiresome, tedious politics. For in fact, there is nothing more important than politics. NOT the politics of American “democracy” and law, of who is elected state legislator to sign the same bills and perpetuate the same system. Not the politics of the “I got involved with the radical left because I enjoy quibbling over trivial details and writing rhetorically about an unreachable utopia” anarchist. Not the politics of any leader or ideology that demands that you make sacrifices for “the cause.” But the politics of our everyday lives.

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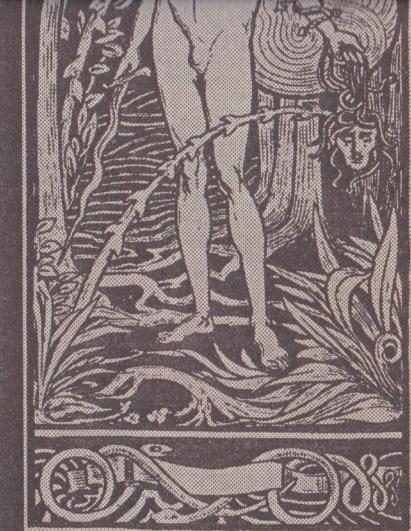
After we make politics relevant and exciting, the rest will follow. But from a dreary, merely theoretical and/or ritualized politics, nothing valuable can follow. This is not to say that we should show no interest in the welfare of humans, animals, or ecosystems that do not contact us directly in our day to day existence. But the foundation of our politics must be concrete: it must be immediate, it must be obvious to everyone why it is worth the effort, it must be fun in itself. How can we do positive things for others if we ourselves do not enjoy our own lives?

To make this concrete for a moment: an afternoon of collecting food from businesses that would have thrown it away and serving it to hungry people and people who are tired of working to pay for food—that is good political action, but only if you enjoy it. If you do it with your friends, if you meet new friends while you’re doing it, if you fall in love or trade funny stories or just feel proud to have helped a woman by easing her financial needs, that’s good political action. On the other hand, if you spend the afternoon typing an angry letter to an obscure leftist tabloid objecting to a columnist’s use of the term “anarcho-syndicalist,” that’s not going to accomplish shit, and you know it.

Perhaps it is time for a new word for “politics,” since you have made such a swear word out of the old one. For no one should be put off when we talk about acting together to improve our lives.

And so we present to you our demands, which are non-negotiable, and must be met *as soon as possible*—because we’re not going to live forever, are we?

1. Make politics relevant to our everyday experience of life again. The farther away the object of



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• Gloria Cubana is a young lover and clandestine poet raised in the American South.

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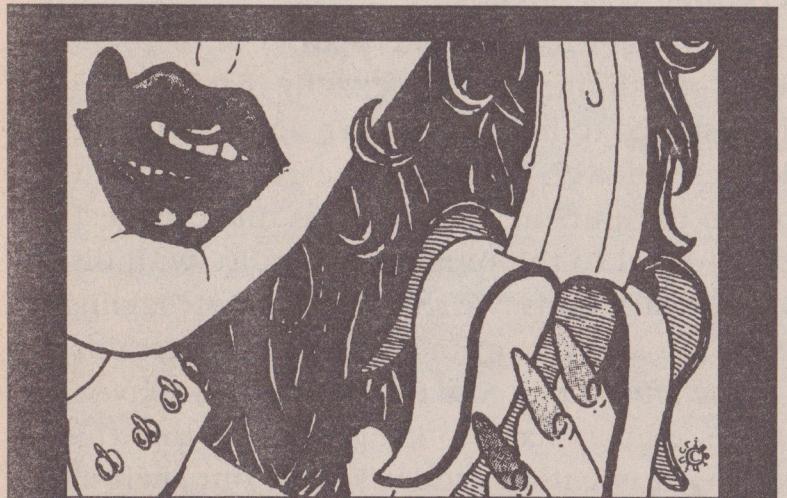
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Welcome to our Ad. It is always reassuring to us here in the Business of Big Bucks, to know that your eyes are perpetually drawn to images of beautiful women sucking on phallic shaped objects—it just makes the job of getting your attention that much easier, and once we have your attention, we are only a step away from selling you something that you have no need for, nor the cash to buy. Just put it on credit—that way we can keep you harnessed to a job that you hate, simply because you need to pay us off. And since you're firmly mired in a job eight hours a day, five days a week, perpetually exhausted and wanting nothing more than to turn on that TV and forget about the drudgery of the world, you'll never do anything to upset the precious balance of this system we all work so hard to maintain—twenty-four hours a day, seven days a week. And of course, once you're in front of the TV—well, then it's those beautiful women again! And the true beauty of it all is: not only is our way efficient—it's practically mandatory!!! You help us, and we help you "stay in the loop!"

CrimethInc.

"Our job is keeping you in line!"

tics, nothing valuable can follow. This is not to say that we should show no interest in the welfare of humans, animals, or ecosystems that do not contact us directly in our day to day existence. But the foundation of our politics must be concrete: it must be immediate, it must be obvious to everyone why it is worth the effort, it must be fun in itself. How can we do positive things for others if we ourselves do not enjoy our own lives?

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1. Make politics relevant to our everyday experience of life again. The farther away the object of our political concern, the less it will mean to us, the less real and pressing it will seem to us, and the more wearisome politics will be.
2. All political activity must be joyous and exciting in itself. You cannot escape from dreariness with more dreariness.
3. To accomplish those first two steps, entirely new political approaches and methods must be created. The old ones are outdated, outmoded. Perhaps they were NEVER any good, and that's why our world is the way it is now.
4. Enjoy yourselves! There is never any excuse for being bored... or boring!

Join us in making the "revolution" a *game*; a game played for the highest stakes of all, but a joyous, carefree game nonetheless!

by Nadia C.

raised in the American South.

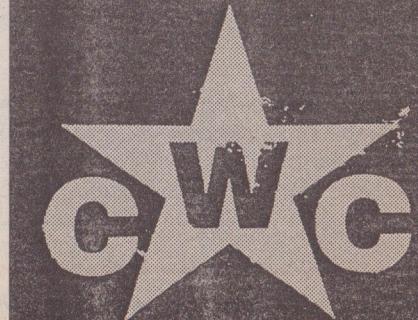
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Visual aids provided by the Paul F. Maul Artists' Group, including F. Mark Dixon, Rita B., and Erika Nawabi.  
Layout by the Abaddon graphics team.



CrimethInc. Workers' Collective

## SEDUCED BY THE IMAGE OF REALITY

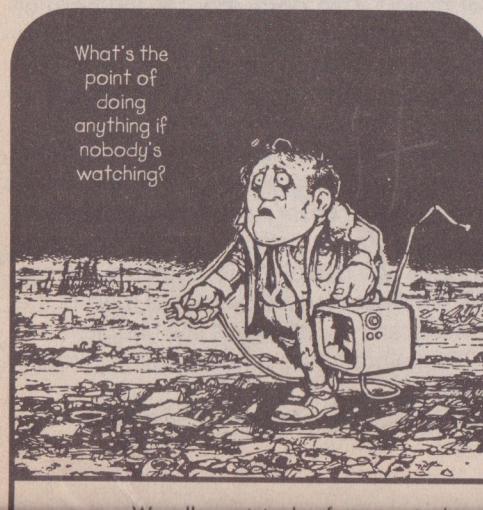
When I would look through magazines as a small child, I used to think that there must be a magical world somewhere where everything looked--and was--perfect. I could see pictures from it in those pages, the smoky air of dimly-lit rooms heavy with drama as the young models lounged in designer fashions. That is where excitement and adventure is to be found, I thought, in the world where every room is flawlessly decorated and every woman's wardrobe is picked and matched with daring and finesse. I resolved to have an adventurous life of my own, and began looking for those rooms and women right away. And though I've discovered since then that romance and excitement rarely come hand in hand with the images of them that are presented to us--usually the opposite is true, that adventure is to be found precisely where there is no time or energy for keeping up appearances--I still catch myself sometimes thinking that everything would be perfect if only I lived in that picturesque log cabin with matching rugs.

Whatever each us may be looking for, we all tend to pursue our desires by pursuing images: symbols of the things we desire. We buy leather jackets when we want rebellion and danger. We purchase fast cars not for the sake of driving fast, but to recapture our lost youth. When we want world revolution, we buy political pamphlets and bumper stickers. Somehow we assume that having all the right accessories will get us the perfect

lives. And when we construct our lives, we often do it according to an image, a pattern that has been laid out for us: hippie, businessman, housewife, punk.

Why do we think so much about images today, rather than concentrating on reality, on our lives and emotions themselves? One of the reasons images have

What's the point of doing anything if nobody's watching?



## WATCHING FROM THE SIDELINES

The curious thing about a spectacle is how it *immobilizes* the spectators: just like the image, it centers their attention, their values, and ultimately their lives around something outside of themselves. It keeps them occupied without making them active, it keeps them feeling involved without giving them control. You can probably think of a thousand different examples of this: television programs, action movies, magazines that give updates on the lives of celebrities and superstars, spectator sports, representative "democracy," the Catholic church.

A spectacle also isolates the people whose attention it commands. Many of us know more about the fictitious characters of popular sitcoms than we know about the lives and loves of our neighbors--for even when we talk to them, it is about television shows, the news, and the weather; thus the very experiences and information that we share in common as spectators of the mass-media serve to separate us from one another. It is the same at a big football game: everybody watching from the bleachers is a nobody, regardless of who they are. They may be sitting next to each other, but all eyes are focused on the field. If they speak to each other, it is almost never *about* each other, but about the game that is being played before them. And although football fans cannot participate in the events of the game they are watching, or exert any real influence over them, they attach the utmost importance to these events and associate their own needs and desires with their outcome in a most unusual way. Rather than concentrating their attention on things that have a real bearing on their desires, they reconstruct their desires to revolve around the things they pay attention to. Their language even conflates the achievements of the team they identify themselves with with their own actions: "we scored a goal!" "we won!" shout the fans from their seats and sofas.

This stands in stark contrast to the way people speak about the things that go on in our own cities and communities. "They're building a new highway," we say about the new changes in our neighborhood. "What will they think of next?" we say about the latest advances in scientific technology. Our language reveals that we think of ourselves as spectators in our own societies. But it's not "They," the mysterious Other People, who have made the world the way it is--it is we, humanity ourselves. No small team of scientists, city planners, and rich bureaucrats could have done all the working and inventing and organizing that it has taken for us to transform this planet; it has taken and still takes all of us, working together, to do this. *We* are the ones doing it, every day. And yet most of us seem to feel that we can have more control over football games than we can over our cities, our jobs, even our own lives.

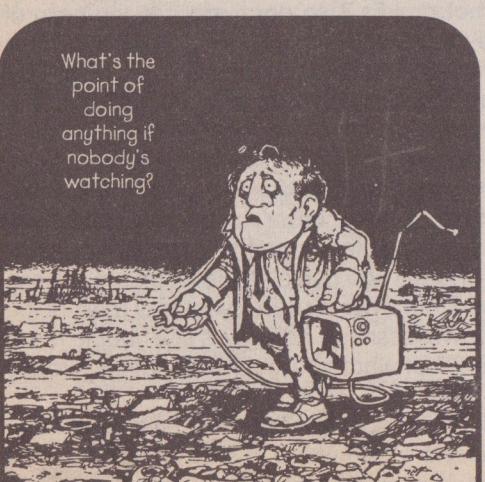
We might have more success in our pursuit of happiness if we start

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Why do we think so much about images today, rather than concentrating on reality, on our lives and emotions themselves? One of the reasons images have attained so much significance in this society is that, unlike activities, images are easy to sell. Advertising and marketing, which are designed to invest products

What's the point of doing anything if nobody's watching?



We all want to be famous, to be seen, frozen, preserved in the media, because we've come to trust what is seen more than what is actually lived. Somehow we've gotten everything backwards and images seem more real to us than experiences. To know that we really exist, that we really matter, we have to see ghosts of ourselves preserved in photographs, on television shows and videotapes, in the public eye.

And when you go on vacation, what do you see? Scores of tourists with video cameras screwed to their faces, as if they're trying to suck all of the real world into the two-dimensional world of images, spending their "time off" seeing the world through a tiny glass lens. Sure, turning everything that you could experience with all five senses into recorded information that you can only observe from a distance, detached, offers us the illusion of having control over our lives: we can rewind and replay them, over and over, until everything looks ridiculous. But what kind of life is that?

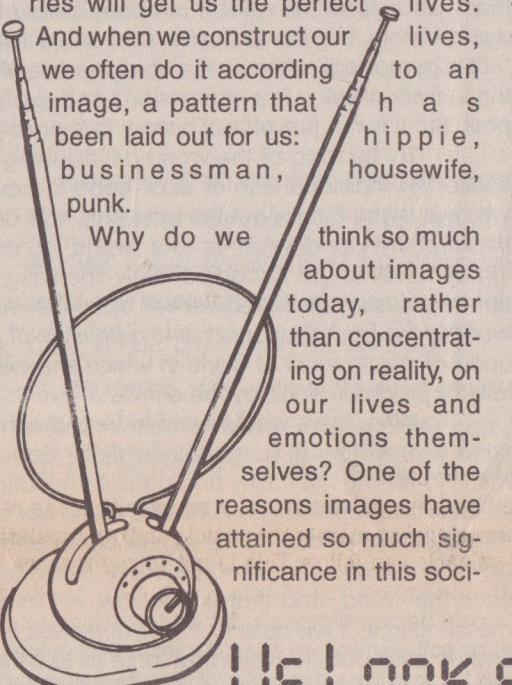
with a symbolic value that will attract consumers, have transformed our culture. Corporations have been spreading propaganda designed to make us believe in the magic powers of their commodities for generations now: deodorant offers popularity, soda offers youth and energy, jeans offer sex appeal. At our jobs, we exchange our time, energy, and creativity for the ability to buy these symbols--and we keep buying them, for of course no quantity of cigarettes can really give anyone sophistication. Rather than satisfying our needs, these products multiply them: for in order to get them, we end up selling parts of our lives away. We keep going back, not knowing any other way, hoping that the new product (self-help books, punk rock records, that vacation cabin with matching rugs) will be the one that will fix everything.

We are easily persuaded to chase these images because it is simply easier

And although football fans cannot participate in the events of the game they are watching, or exert any real influence over them, they attach the utmost importance to these events and associate their own needs and desires with their outcome in a most unusual way. Rather than concentrating their attention on things that have a real bearing on their desires, they reconstruct their desires to revolve around the things they pay attention to. Their language even conflates the achievements of the team they identify themselves with with their own actions: "we scored a goal!" "we won!" shout the fans from their seats and sofas.

This stands in stark contrast to the way people speak about the things that go on in our own cities and communities. "They're building a new highway," we say about the new changes in our neighborhood. "What will they think of next?" we say about the latest advances in scientific technology. Our language reveals that we think of ourselves as spectators in our own societies. But it's not "They," the mysterious Other People, who have made the world the way it is--it is we, humanity ourselves. No small team of scientists, city planners, and rich bureaucrats could have done all the working and inventing and organizing that it has taken for us to transform this planet; it has taken and still takes all of us, working together, to do this. We are the ones doing it, every day. And yet most of us seem to feel that we can have more control over football games than we can over our cities, our jobs, even our own lives.

We might have more success in our pursuit of happiness if we start trying to really *participate*. Rather than trying to fit images, we can seek exciting and rewarding experiences; for hap-



# WE LOOK FOR LIFE IN THE image of Life



text by NietzsChe Guevara, under license from Warner Brothers Entertainment.

piness does not come from what you have or how you appear, but from what you do and how you feel.

And instead of accepting the role of passive spectator to sports, society, and life, it is up to each of us to figure out how to play an active and significant part in

Without our chewing gum, no one will want to kiss you. Without our deodorant, no one will want to touch you. Without our lipstick, you won't catch anyone's eye. Without our athletic shoes, you won't be able to keep up with the guys. Without our cigarettes, sophistication escapes you. Without our cleaning products, no one will want to come home to you. Your children won't have any games to play without our toys and cartoons. She won't enjoy the date unless you take her to see one of our movies. The fun hasn't really started until you have our beer in your hand. How can you feel free and alive without our new sports car?

Consider all your leisure-time activities and you'll see: you're not having fun unless you're paying for it.

We play on your insecurities, on your fears and insecurities. The

we've come to trust what is seen more than what is actually lived. Somehow we've gotten everything backwards and images seem more real to us than experiences. To know that we really exist, that we really matter, we have to see ghosts of ourselves preserved in photographs, on television shows and videotapes, in the public eye.

And when you go on vacation, what do you see? Scores of tourists with video cameras screwed to their faces, as if they're trying to suck all of the real world into the two-dimensional world of images, spending their "time off" seeing the world through a tiny glass lens. Sure, turning everything that you could experience with all five senses into recorded information that you can only observe from a distance, detached, offers us the illusion of having control over our lives: we can rewind and replay them, over and over, until everything looks ridiculous. But what kind of life is that?

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We are easily persuaded to chase these images because it is simply easier to change the scenery around you than it is to change your own life. How much less trouble, how much less risky it would be if you could make your life perfect just by collecting all the right accessories! No participation necessary. The image comes to embody all the things you desire, and you spend all your time and energy trying to get the details right (the bohemian tries to find the perfect black beret and the right poetry readings to attend--the frat boy has to be seen with the right friends, at the right parties, drinking the right beers and wearing the right informal dress shirts) rather than pursuing the desires themselves--for of course it's easier to identify yourself with a prefabricated image than to identify exactly what you want in life. But if you really want adventure, an Australian hunting jacket won't suffice, and if you want real romance, dinner and a movie with the most popular girl at your school might not be enough.

Fascinated as we are by images, our values have come to revolve around a world we can never actually experience. There's no way into the pages of the magazine, there's no way to be the archetypal punk or the perfect executive. We're "trapped" out here in the real world, forever. And yet we keep looking for life in pictures, in fashions, in spectacles of all kinds, anything that we can collect or watch--instead of *doing*.

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trying to fit images, we can seek exciting and rewarding experiences; for hap-

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from Warner Brothers Entertainment.

ety is that, unlike activities, images are easy to sell. Advertising and marketing, which are designed to invest products

piness does not come from what you have or how you appear, but from what

you do and how you feel. And instead of accepting the role of passive spectator to sports, society, and life, it is up to each of us to figure out how to play an active and significant part in creating the worlds around us and within us. Perhaps one day we can build a new society in which we can all be involved together in the decisions that affect the lives we lead; then we will be able to truly choose our own destinies, instead of feeling helpless and left out.

Without our chewing gum, no one will want to kiss you. Without our deodorant, no one will want to touch you. Without our lipstick, you won't catch anyone's eye. Without our athletic shoes, you won't be able to keep up with the guys. Without our cigarettes, sophistication escapes you. Without our cleaning products, no one will want to come home to you. Your children won't have any games to play without our toys and cartoons. She won't enjoy the date unless you take her to see one of our movies. The fun hasn't really started until you have our beer in your hand. How can you feel free and alive without our new sports car?

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We play on your insecurities, on your fears and anxieties. There are products for every human activity, even sex, because the things that are natural and free are not good enough without our synthetic supplements. Eventually you're so conditioned that you'll pay for the most useless of products, just to be paying for something. And should you ever try to step outside our system, you'll see that we really have made it impossible to be a human being without our products: you must pay to eat, pay to sleep, pay to keep warm, pay for a space just to *exist*.



CrimethInc.  
"Depend on us!"



*Those who cannot forget the past are condemned to repeat it.*

History:

# The Dead Hand of the Past

Remember how differently time passed when you were twelve years old? One summer was a whole lifetime, and each day passed like a month does for you now. For everything was new: each day held experiences and emotions that you had never encountered before, and by the time that summer was over you had become a different person. Perhaps you felt a wild freedom then that has since deserted you: you felt as if anything could happen, as if your life could end up being virtually anything at all. Now, deeper into that life, it doesn't seem so unpredictable. The things that were once new and transforming have long since lost their freshness and danger, and the future ahead of you seems to have already been determined by your past.

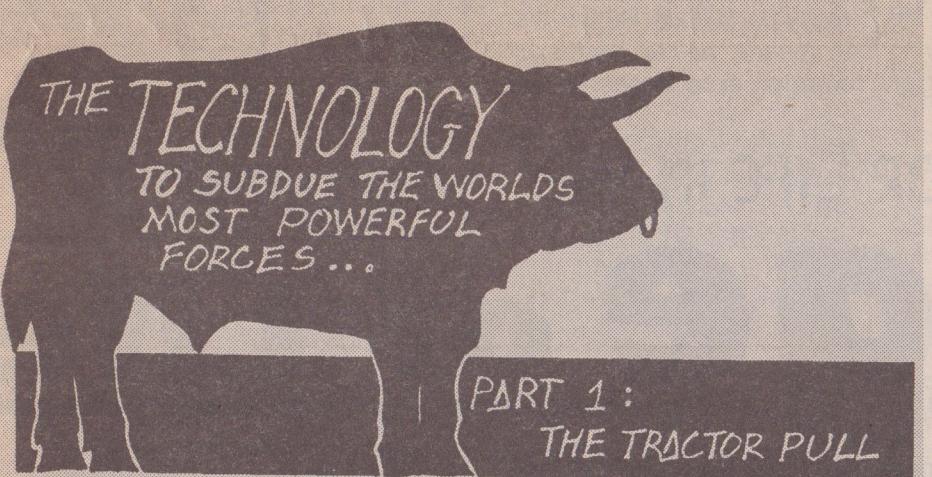
It is thus that each of us is dominated by history: the past lies upon us like a dead hand, guiding and controlling as if from the grave. At the same time as it gives the individual a conception of herself, an "identity," it piles weight upon her that she must fight to shake off if she is to remain light and free enough to continue reinventing her life and herself. It is the same for the artist: even the most challenging innovations eventually become crutches and clichés. Once an artist has come up with one good solution for a creative problem, it is hard for her to break free of it to conceive of other possible solutions. That is why most great artists can only offer a few really revolutionary ideas: they become trapped by the very systems they create, just as these systems trap those who come after. It is hard to do something entirely new when one finds oneself up against a thousand years of painting history and tradition. And this is the same for the lover, for the mathematician and the adventurer: for all, the past is an adversary to action in the present, an ever-increasing force of inertia that must be overcome.

It is the same for the radical, too. Conventional wisdom has it that a knowledge of the past is indispensable in the pursuit of freedom and social change. But today's radical thinkers and activists are no closer to changing the world for their knowledge of past philosophies and struggles; on the contrary, they seem mired in ancient methods and arguments, unable to apprehend what is needed in the present to make things happen. Their place in the tradition of struggle has trapped them in a losing battle, defending positions long useless and outmoded; their constant references to the past not only render them incomprehensible to others, but also prevent them from referencing what is going on around them. Let's consider what it is about history that makes it so paralyzing. In the case of world history, it is the exclusive, anti-subjective nature of the thing: History (with a capital "H") is purportedly seen by the objective eye of science, as if "from above;" it demands that the individual value her impressions and experiences less than the official Truth about the past. But it is not just official history that paralyzes us, it is the very idea of the past itself.

Try thinking of the world as including all past and future time as well as present space. An individual can at least hope to have some control over that part of the world which is in the future; but the past only acts on her, she can never act back upon it. If she thinks of the world [whether that "world" consists of her life, or human history] as consisting of mostly future, proportionately speaking, she will see herself as fairly free to choose her own destiny and exert her will upon the world. But if her world-view places most of the world in the past, that puts her in a position of powerlessness: not only is she unable to act upon or create most of world in which she exists, but what future does remain is already largely predetermined by the effects of events past.

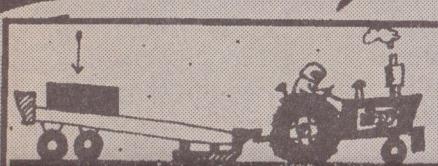
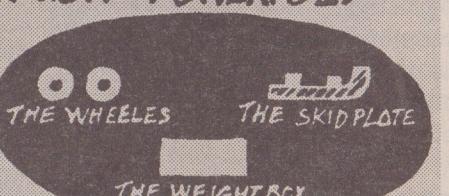
Who, then, would want to be a meaningless fleck near the end of the eight thousand year history of human civilization? Conceiving of the world in such a way can only result in feelings of futility and predetermination. We must think of the world differently to think it possible to change it, and our present day existence nowhere

# of the Past



IN TRACTOR PULL COMPETITION, THE INEVITABLE  
IS KNOWN AS THE SLED. THE SLED WILL LAY LOW  
ANY TRACTOR NO MATTER HOW POWERFUL.

ALL TRACTOR PULL  
SLEDS CONTAIN  
3 KEY PARTS:



AT THE BEGINNING OF THE PULL, THE  
WEIGHT BOX IS POSITIONED OVER THE  
WHEELS WHERE FRICTION IS MINIMAL

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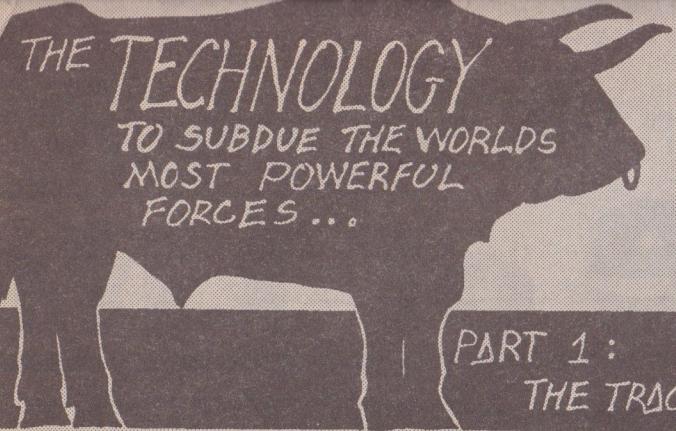
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Who, then, would want to be a meaningless fleck near the end of the eight thousand year history of human civilization? Conceiving of the world in such a way can only result in feelings of futility and predetermination. We must think of the world differently to escape this trap--we must instead place our selves and our present day existence where they rightfully belong, in the center of our universe, and shake off the dead weight of the past. Time may well extend before and behind us infinitely, but that is not how we experience the world, and that is not how we must visualize it either, if we want to find any meaning in it. If we dare to throw ourselves into the unknown and unpredictable, to continually seek out situations that force us to *be* in the present moment, we can break free of the feelings of inevitability and inertia that constrain our lives--and, in those instants, step *outside* of history.

What does it mean to step outside of history? It means, simply, to step into the present, to step into yourself. If you have ever been part of a sudden social upheaval (Paris 1968, Los Angeles 1992, to offer some historical examples), or even experienced a sudden change in your own life, you know what this is like. Time is compressed to the moment, space is concentrated to one point, and the unprecedented *density* of life is exhilarating. The rupture that occurs when you shake off everything that has come before is not just a break with the past--you are ripping yourself out of the past-future continuum you had built, hurling yourself into a vacuum where *anything* can happen and you are forced to remake yourself according to a new design. It is a sensation as terrifying as it is liberating, and nothing false or superfluous can survive it. Without such purges, life becomes so choked up with the dead and dry that it is nearly unlivable--as it is for us, today.

None of this is to say that we should condone the deliberate lies of those who would *rewrite* history, with the intention of trapping us even deeper in ignorance and passivity than we are now. But the solution is not to combat their supposed "objective truths" with more claims to Historical Truth--for it is not *more* past we need, to weigh upon us, but more attention to today. We must not allow them to make our lives and thoughts revolve only around what has been; instead we must realize that it is up to us to reveal what is true about the present and what is possible from here.

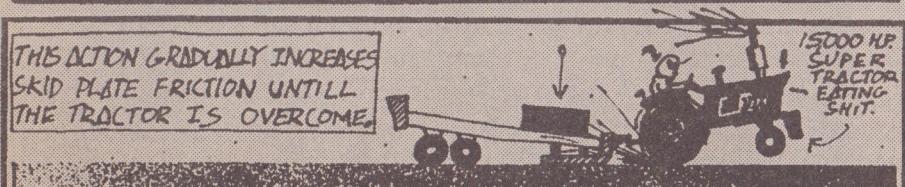
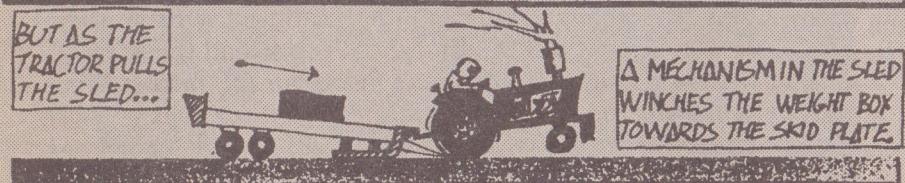
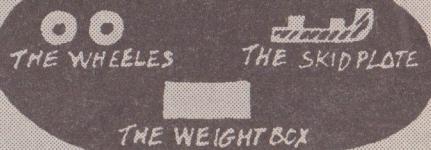
So what can we embrace in place of History? Myth, perhaps. Not the obscurist superstitions and holy lies of religion and capitalism, but the democratic myths of storytellers. Myth makes no claims to false impartiality or objective Truth, it does not purport to offer an exhaustive explanation of the cosmos. Myth belongs to everyone, as it is made and remade by everyone, so it can never be used by one group to lord itself over another. And it does not paralyze--instead of trapping people in the chains of cause and effect, myth makes them conscious of the enormous range of possibilities that their own lives have to



PART 1:  
THE TRACTOR PULL

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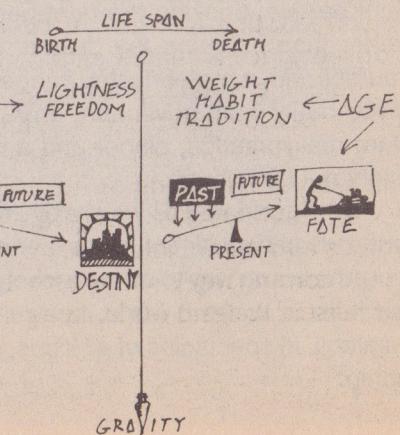
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There may be those who will threaten that the whole world will unravel if we stop concerning ourselves with the past and think only of the present.

Let it unravel, then! A lot of good history has done us until now, repeating and repeating itself. Let's break out of it once and for all, before we too tread the circular path that our ancestors have worn so bare.

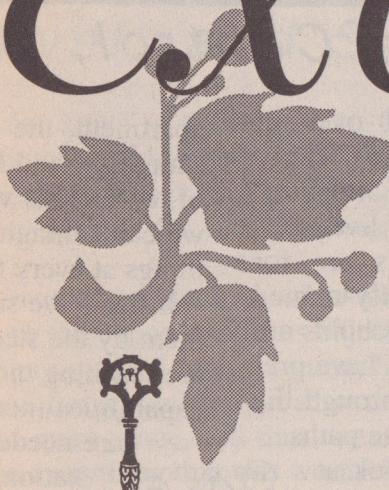
Let's make the leap out of History, and make the moments of our daily lives the world we live in and care about--only then can we make it into a place that has meaning for us. The present belongs to those who are able to seize it, to recognize all that it is and can be!



"Sometimes," said Julia, "I feel the past and the future pressing so hard on either side that there's no room for the present at all."

# Product is the Excrement of Action

by Jeanette Winterson

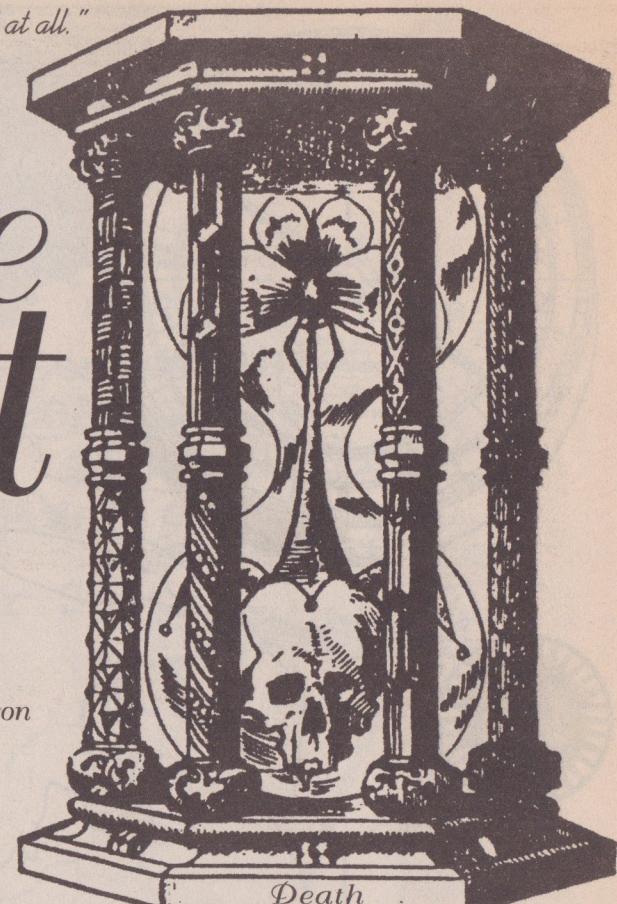


*Honestly, when was the last time you spent a whole day just enjoying what you were doing and feeling? Enjoying it solely for its own sake, without thinking about the future or worrying about the long-term consequences? When was the last time you spent a whole month living that way? Do you have a hard time forgetting about your responsibilities, your goals, your productivity, and just being in the present?*

Today, our lives revolve around *things*. We measure our worth in terms of our material possessions: in terms of our control over things outside ourselves. We gauge our success in life in terms of our "productivity"; that is, our ability to make these things. Our social system revolves around the production and consumption of material goods more than anything else. Even when we are not thinking about material objects, we represent our lives to ourselves as things: we consider our accomplishments, our future prospects, our

is bound to generalize that mode of thinking to other parts of his life: he comes to evaluate possible actions according to the rewards they offer, just as he would evaluate a job according to the wage it offers.

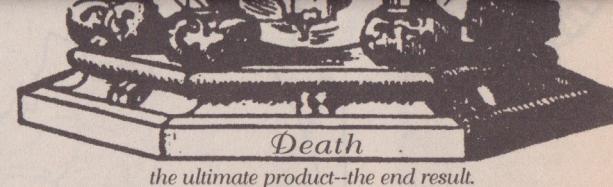
Thus, the present has lost almost all significance for modern man. Instead he spends his life always planning for the future: he studies for a diploma, rather than for the pleasure of learning; he chooses his job for social status, wealth, and "security," rather than for joy; he saves his money for big purchases and vacation trips, rather than



*Death*

*the ultimate product—the end result.*

Artists suffer from this tendency most of all; for their vocation itself depends on making products out of the raw material of real-life experience. There is something of the capitalist's lust for domination in the way that artists mold their emotions and experiences into forms of their own making through the act of expression; for the expression of feelings and sensations, unique and unfathomable as they are, always consists of a kind of simplification. It isn't enough for the artist to just experience and appreciate life as it really is; she comes to cannibalize her life for what is really



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*Modern society is centered around the production and distribution of material goods, rather than the happiness and satisfaction of its participants.*



*Thus*

*Modern man thinks of his life in terms of what he has "to show for it," rather than considering the life itself.*



But products are the *excrement* of actions. Product is what is left over when the dust settles and the pulse returns to normal, when the day is done, when the coffin is laid in the ground. We do not exist in the settling dust or the scorecard; we are here in the present tense, in the making, the doing, the feeling. Just as we try to immortalize ourselves by fleeing into the world of fixed, deathless images, we try to externalize ourselves by thinking in terms of the results of our actions rather than our experience of the actions themselves. After all, it's so complicated to have to worry about whether you are really enjoying yourself, how you are feeling in the moment. It is easier to focus on the results, the hard evidence of your life; these

On Sundays he goes to church, where he is told to do good deeds in order to one day receive eternal salvation (as Nietzsche says, the good Christian still wants to be *paid well*), rather than for the sheer pleasure of helping others. The "aristocratic disregard for consequences," that ability to act for the sake of action that every hero possesses, is far beyond him.

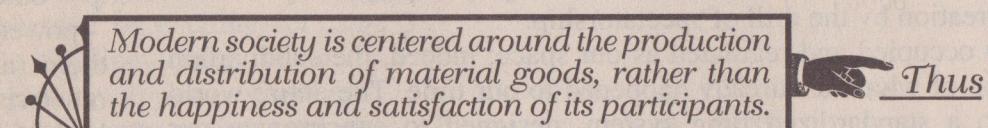
It is a cliché that men and women of middle class and middle age have a hard time putting aside their insurance policies and investment programs to seize the moment; but, all too often, we, too, end up exchanging present for future and experience for souvenirs. We save mementos, trophies, boxes of keepsakes, old letters, as if life can be gathered, stored up, frozen for later... for later?

Certainly, excretion is a healthy and necessary function of the soul as well as the body, and there is a place for art in our lives as a way to pour feeling back into the world when the heart is full to overflowing; but if you keep trying to do it after it is unnecessary, you eventually force out your heart and the rest of your insides (remember the fairy tale of the goose and the golden eggs?). We must put life and experience first, we must meet the world with only this in mind, as fresh and innocent as when we were children, with no intentions to cannibalize, categorize, organize, or simplify the profound infinities of our experiences. Otherwise, we will miss what is most vital, most beautiful, most immediate in this world, in our search for things that can be pressed flat and preserved "for

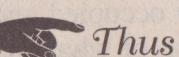
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*Modern man thinks of his life in terms of what he has "to show for it," rather than considering the life itself.*



But products are the *excrement* of actions. Product is what is left over when the dust settles and the pulse returns to normal, when the day is done, when the coffin is laid in the ground. We do not exist in the settling dust or the scorecard; we are here in the present tense, in the making, the doing, the feeling. Just as we try to immortalize ourselves by fleeing into the world of fixed, deathless images, we try to externalize ourselves by thinking in terms of the results of our actions rather than our experience of the actions themselves. After all, it's so complicated to have to worry about whether you are really enjoying yourself, how you are feeling in the moment. It is easier to focus on the results, the hard evidence of your life; these things seem easier to understand, and easier to control.

Of course today's average worker is used to thinking about the ends rather than the means. He spends most of his time and energy working at a job that in all likelihood does not fulfill his dreams. He looks forward to payday every two weeks, for he counts on his paycheck to make sense out of his life: without it, he would feel like he was wasting his time. If he didn't look at the "consequences" of his actions as a justification for them, life would be unbearable--what if he constantly considered how he was feeling as he bagged the groceries, or asked himself if he was having fun every moment he struggled with the fax machine? Insofar as his everyday experience of life is tedious and meaningless, he needs to concentrate on the coming weekend, the next vacation, his next purchases, to fend off insanity. And eventually he

On Sundays he goes to church, where he is told to do good deeds in order to one day receive eternal salvation (as Nietzsche says, the good Christian still wants to be *paid well*), rather than for the sheer pleasure of helping others. The "aristocratic disregard for consequences," that ability to act for the sake of action that every hero possesses, is far beyond him.

It is a cliché that men and women of middle class and middle age have a hard time putting aside their insurance policies and investment programs to seize the moment; but, all too often, we, too, end up exchanging present for future and experience for souvenirs. We save mementos, trophies, boxes of keepsakes, old letters, as if life can be gathered, stored up, frozen for later... for later? For when? Life is here with us now, running through us like a river; and like a river, it cannot be held in place without losing its magic. The more time we spend trying to "save it up," the less we have to throw ourselves into it.

The worst of us, in fact, are the radicals and artists. All too often, we "revolutionaries" expend our efforts thinking and talking about a revolution "that is to come," rather than concentrating on *making revolution* in the present tense. We're so used to thinking in terms of production that even when we try to make life into something immediate and exciting, we still end up centering our efforts around an event in the future—one that we may not even live to see. And like factory supervisors, we worry more about our productivity (the number of new believers recruited, the progress of the "cause," etc.) than about how we and our fellow human beings are feeling and living.

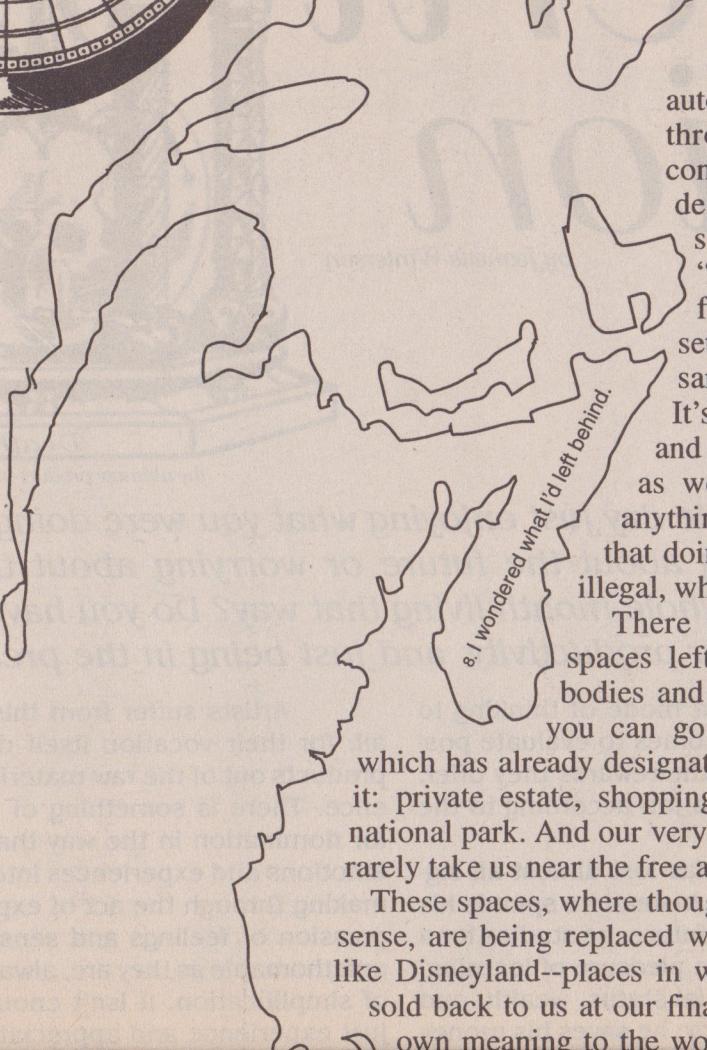
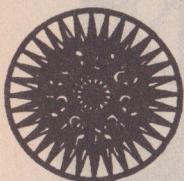
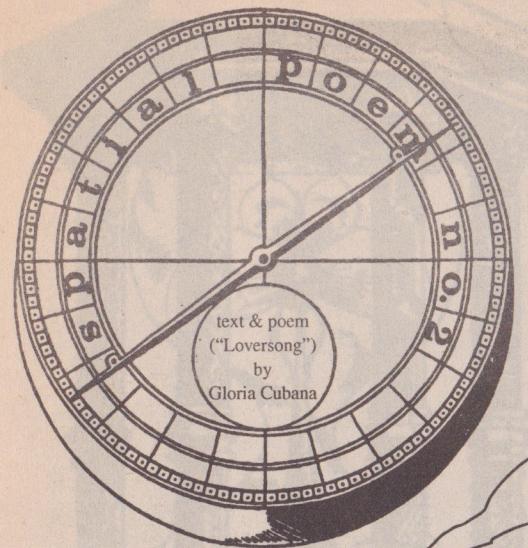
Certainly, excretion is a healthy and necessary function of the soul as well as the body, and there is a place for art in our lives as a way to pour feeling back into the world when the heart is full to overflowing; but if you keep trying to do it after it is unnecessary, you eventually force out your heart and the rest of your insides (remember the fairy tale of the goose and the golden eggs?). We must put life and experience first, we must meet the world with only this in mind, as fresh and innocent as when we were children, with no intentions to cannibalize, categorize, organize, or simplify the profound infinities of our experiences. Otherwise, we will miss what is most vital, most beautiful, most immediate in this world, in our search for things that can be pressed flat and preserved "for all time." **Imagination should be used first and foremost to transform everyday reality, not just to make symbolic representations of it.** How many exciting novels could be written about the sort of lives that most of us lead these days, anyway? *Let us make living our art, rather than seeking to make mere art out of our lives.*

If we ever find happiness, it will be in the process of living, of doing what we want and living out our dreams, not in the products of our lives. If we don't pause and enjoy the present now, when will we?

So let's stop "making history"—we're all so obsessed with "making a mark"—and start living. *That would be a real revolution.*

Let's live for **today**, for our lives, not our "results"!

*"But I tell you, Henri, that every moment you steal from the present is a moment that you have lost forever. There's only now."*



# Alienation

## The Map of Space/Time Control, Space

In the modern world, control is exerted over us automatically by the spaces we live and move in. We go through certain rituals in our lives--work, "leisure," consumption, submission--because the world we live in is designed for these alone. We all know malls are for shopping, offices are for working, ironically-named "living" rooms are for watching television, and schools are for obeying teachers. All the spaces we travel in have preset meanings, and all it takes to keep us going through the same motions is to keep us moving along the same paths.

It's hard to find anything to do in Walmart but look at and purchase merchandise; and, accustomed to doing this as we are, it's hard to conceive that there could be anything else we could do there anyway--not to mention that doing anything but shopping there is pretty much illegal, when you think about it.

There are fewer and fewer free, undeveloped spaces left in the world where we can let our bodies and minds run free. Almost every place you can go belongs to some person or group which has already designated a meaning and prescribed use for it: private estate, shopping district, superhighway, classroom, national park. And our very predictable routes through the world rarely take us near the free areas that do remain.

These spaces, where thought and pleasure can be free in every sense, are being replaced with carefully controlled environments like Disneyland--places in which our desires are prefabricated and sold back to us at our financial and emotional expense. Giving our own meaning to the world and creating our own ways to play and

apartment, the dance club) via staircase), and little chance to travel of ten nations without seeing we can't imagine truly free things at every turn.

Instead, we sit in traffic jams, them by the steel cages of our are reaching more of the world's capabilities increase, our cities

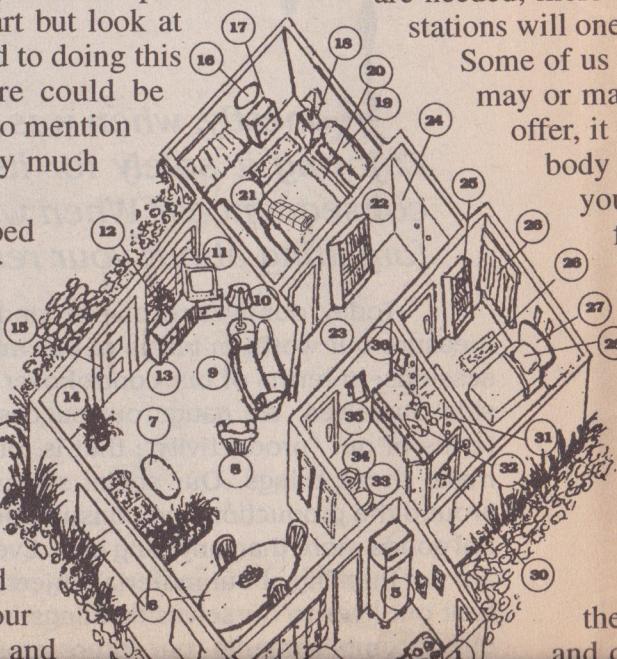
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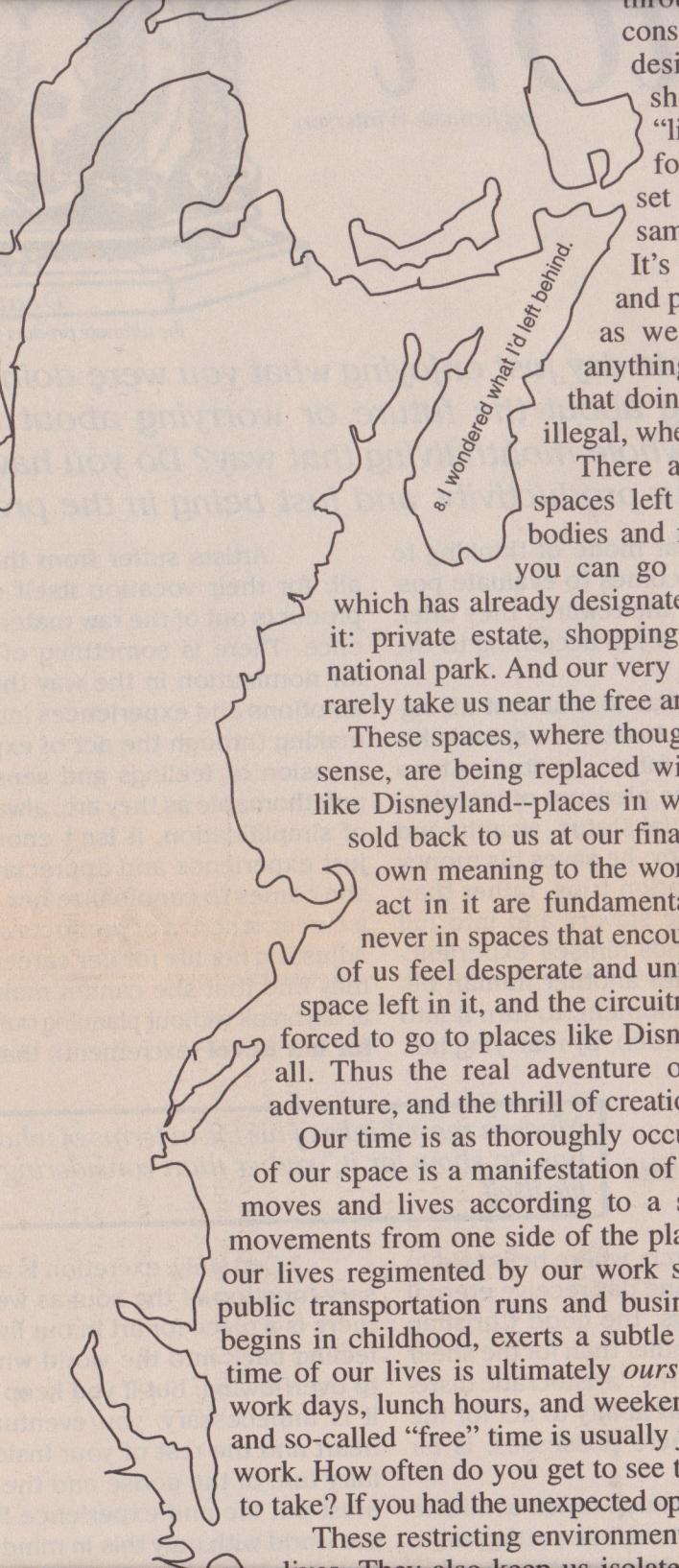
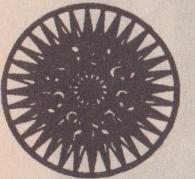
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These spaces, where thought and pleasure can be free in every sense, are being replaced with carefully controlled environments like Disneyland--places in which our desires are prefabricated and sold back to us at our financial and emotional expense. Giving our own meaning to the world and creating our own ways to play and act in it are fundamental parts of human life; today, when we are never in spaces that encourage this, it should be no surprise that so many of us feel desperate and unfulfilled. But because the world has so little free space left in it, and the circuitry of our everyday lives never takes us there, we're forced to go to places like Disneyland for any semblance of play and excitement at all. Thus the real adventure our hearts crave has been largely replaced by fake adventure, and the thrill of creation by the drill of spectatorship.

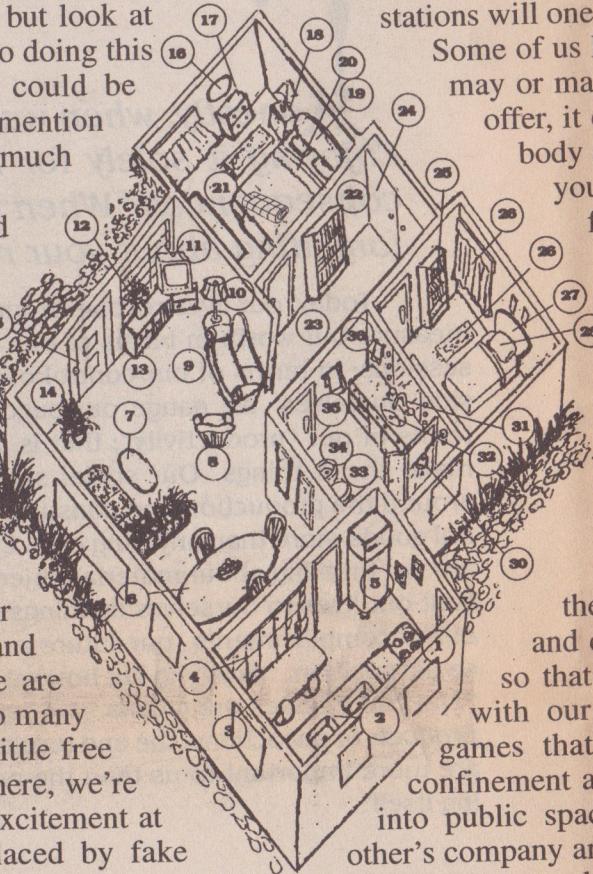
Our time is as thoroughly occupied and regulated as our space; indeed, the subdivision of our space is a manifestation of what has already happened to our time. The entire world moves and lives according to a standardized time system, designed to synchronize our movements from one side of the planet to the other. Inside of this larger system, we all have our lives regimented by our work schedules and/or school hours, as well as the hours that public transportation runs and businesses operate, etc. This scheduling of our lives, which begins in childhood, exerts a subtle but deep control over us all: we come to forget that the time of our lives is ultimately *ours* to spend how we choose, and instead think in terms of work days, lunch hours, and weekends. A truly spontaneous life is unthinkable to most of us; and so-called "free" time is usually just time that has been scheduled for something other than work. How often do you get to see the sun rise? How many sunny afternoon walks do you get to take? If you had the unexpected opportunity to take an exciting trip this week, could you do it?

These restricting environments and schedules drastically limit the vast potential of our lives. They also keep us isolated from each other. At our jobs, we spend a great deal of

we can't imagine truly free things at every turn.

Instead, we sit in traffic jams, them by the steel cages of our cars. As our technologies and capabilities increase, our cities are needed; more cars and stations will one day

Some of us look for what may or may not be offered, it offers a body at least your sense of feet.



the coming and class so that we with our own games that will confinement and into public spaces other's company and other power outages can bring them (after all, they do otherwise drearily predictably in doing new and exciting things like concerts in the streets, seashore, supermarkets, public fairs, and so on).

We need to invent new ways of travel, as well. Try living without a clock, without synchronizing your life with the rest of the busy, busy world. Try taking a long trip on foot or bicycle, so that you will encounter everything that you pass through.

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These restricting environments and schedules drastically limit the vast potential of our lives. They also keep us isolated from each other. At our jobs, we spend a great deal of time doing one particular kind of labor with one particular group of people, in one set place (or at least in one set environment, for construction workers and "temp" employees). Such limited, repetitive experience gives us a very limited perspective on the world, and keeps us from coming to know people from other backgrounds. Our homes isolate us further: today we keep ourselves locked apart in little boxes, partly out of fear of those capitalism has treated even worse than ourselves, and partly because we believe the paranoia propaganda of the companies that sell security systems.

Today's suburbs are cemetaries of community, the people packed separately into boxes... just like our supermarket products, sealed for "freshness." With thick walls between us and our neighbors, and our friends and families scattered across cities and nations, it's hard to have any kind of community at all, let alone share community space in which people can benefit from each other's creativity. And both our homes and our jobs keep us tied down to one place, stationary, unable to travel far through the world except on hasty vacations.

Even our travel is restricted and restricting. Our modern methods of transportation--cars, buses, subways, trains, airplanes--all keep us locked onto fixed tracks, watching the outside world go by through a screen, as if it were a particularly boring television show. Each of us lives in a personal world that consists mostly of well-known destinations (the workplace, the grocery store, a friend's

11. Your letters pressed against my wet cheek  
1. We were young and strange and we transformed space.

And my hands were filled with shifting sand. 10.



A curious effect of the development of rapid transit systems is that communities closes, the distance between individuals *within* those

games that wi confinement and into public spaces other's company and c power outages can bring them (after all, they do m otherwise drearily predictab in doing new and exciting t concerts in the streets, sex supermarkets, public fairs o

We need to invent new c travel, as well. Try living without a clock, without synchronizing your life with the rest of the busy, busy world. Try taking a long trip on foot or bicycle, so that you will encounter everything that you pass between your starting point and your destination firsthand, without a screen. Try exploring in your own neighborhood, looking on rooftops and around corners you never noticed before-- you'll be amazed how muc adventure is hidden there waiting for you!



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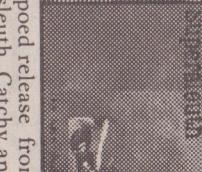
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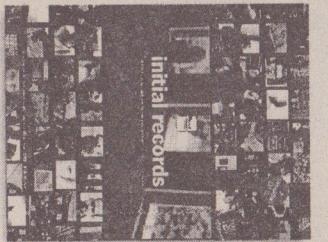
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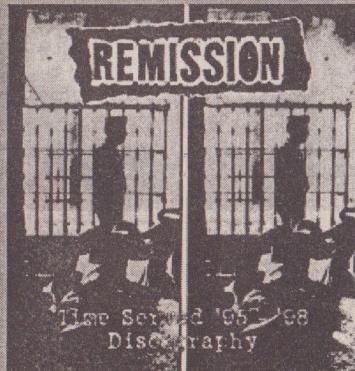
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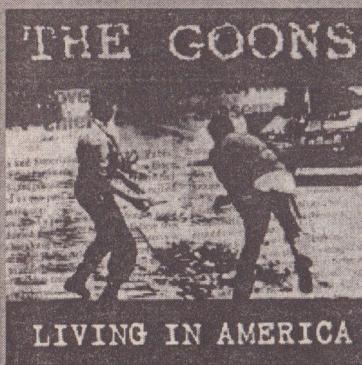
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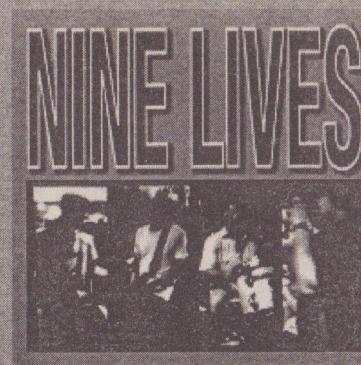
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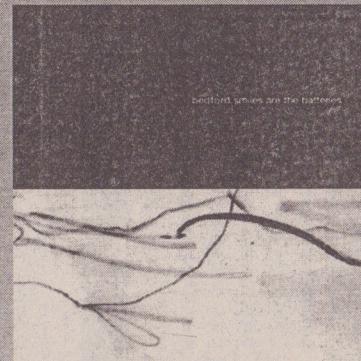
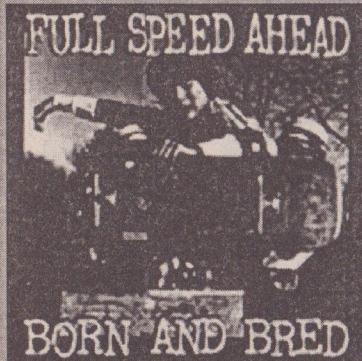
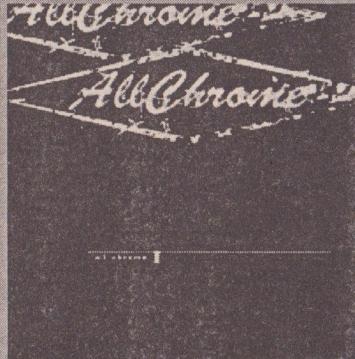
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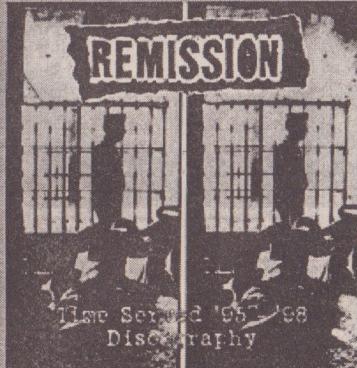
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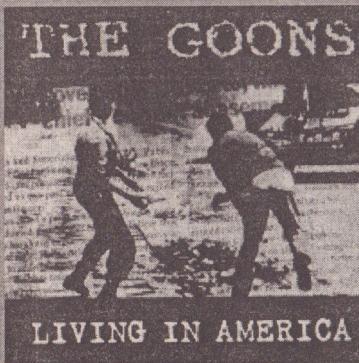
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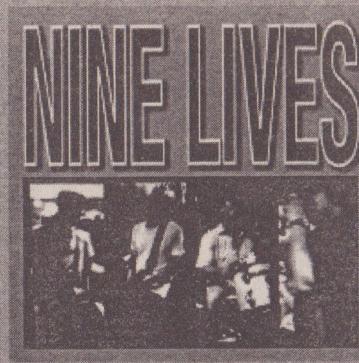
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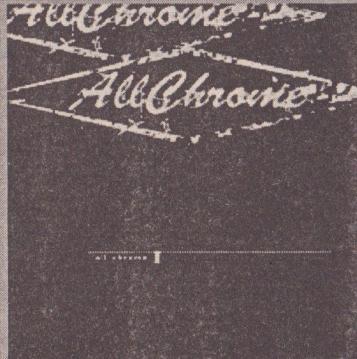
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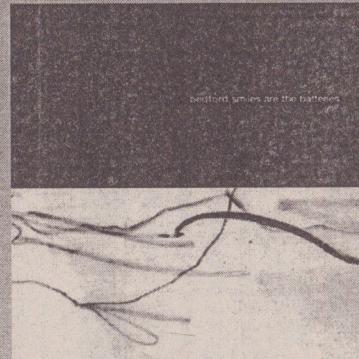
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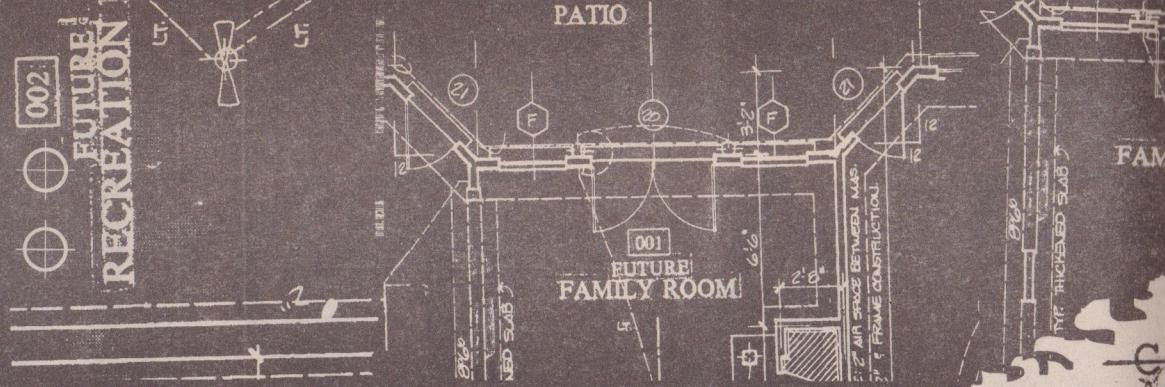
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# Dimension Nation

## The Map of Despair



### /Time Control, Space Travel, and Space Exploration

is exerted over us and move in. We go lives--work, "leisure," the world we live in is know malls are for living, ironically-named television, and schools are as we travel in have prep us going through the along the same paths.

Walmart but look at  
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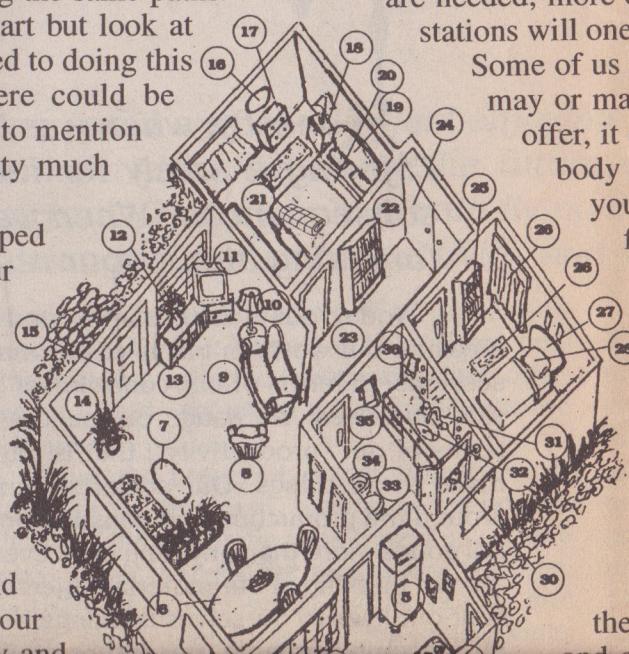
apartment, the dance club) with a few links in between them (sitting in the car, standing in the subway, walking up the staircase), and little chance to encounter anything unexpected or discover any new places. A man could travel the freeways of ten nations without seeing anything but asphalt and gas stations, so long as he stayed in his car. Locked onto our tracks, we can't imagine truly *free* travel, voyages of discovery that would bring us into direct contact with brand new people and things at every turn.

Instead, we sit in traffic jams, surrounded by hundreds of people in the same predicament as ourselves, but separated from them by the steel cages of our cars--so they appear to us as objects in our way rather than fellow human beings. We think we are reaching more of the world with our modern transportation; but in fact we see less of it, if anything. As our transportation capabilities increase, our cities sprawl farther and farther across the landscape. Whenever travel distances increase, more cars are needed; more cars demand more space, and thus distances increase again... and again. At this rate highways and gas stations will one day replace everything that was worth traveling to in the first place.

Some of us look at the internet as the "final frontier," as a free, undeveloped space still ripe for exploring. Cyberspace may or may not offer some degree of freedom to those who can afford to use and explore it; but whatever it might offer, it offers on the condition that we check our bodies at the door: voluntary amputation. Remember, you are a body at least as much as a mind: is it freedom to sit, stationary, staring at glowing lights for hours, without using your senses of taste, touch, or smell? Have you forgotten the sensations of wet grass or warm sand under bare feet, of eucalyptus tree or hickory smoke in your nostrils? Do you remember the scent of tomato stems? The glint of candlelight, the thrill of running, swimming, touching?

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the world we live in is  
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we can't imagine truly *free* travel, voyages of discovery that would bring us into direct contact with brand new people and  
things at every turn.

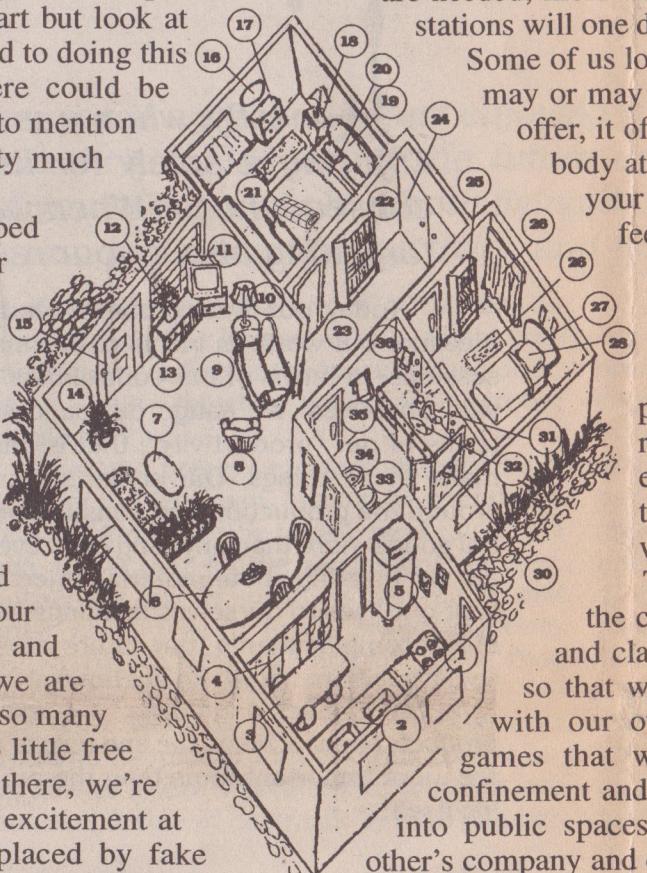
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with our own dreams and desires. We need  
games that will bring us together, out of the  
confinement and isolation of our private homes, and  
into public spaces where we can benefit from each  
other's company and creativity. Just as natural disasters and  
power outages can bring people together and be exciting for  
them (after all, they do make for a little thrilling variety in an  
otherwise drearily predictable world), our games will join us together  
in doing new and exciting things. We will have poetry in the factories,  
concerts in the streets, sex in the fields and libraries, free picnics in  
supermarkets, public fairs on freeways.

We need to invent new conceptions of time and new modes of  
travel, as well. Try living  
without a clock, without  
synchronizing your life with  
the rest of the busy, busy  
world. Try taking a long  
trip on foot or bicycle, so  
that you will encounter  
everything that you pass



And I sobbed

16. And the world seemed bigger than it ever had before.

3. I promised to bring you here and make you fall in love.

What savage desire moved within me? 2.

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ourselves, and partly  
t sell security systems.  
separately into boxes...  
walls between us and  
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e in which people can  
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transportation--cars, buses,  
the outside world go by  
us lives in a personal  
cery store, a friend's

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everything that you pass  
between your starting  
point and your  
destination firsthand,  
without a screen.  
Try exploring in  
your own  
neighborhood,  
looking on  
rooftops and  
around corners  
you never  
noticed before--  
you'll be amazed how much  
adventure is hidden there  
waiting for you!



5. The delirium and fight of freedom.

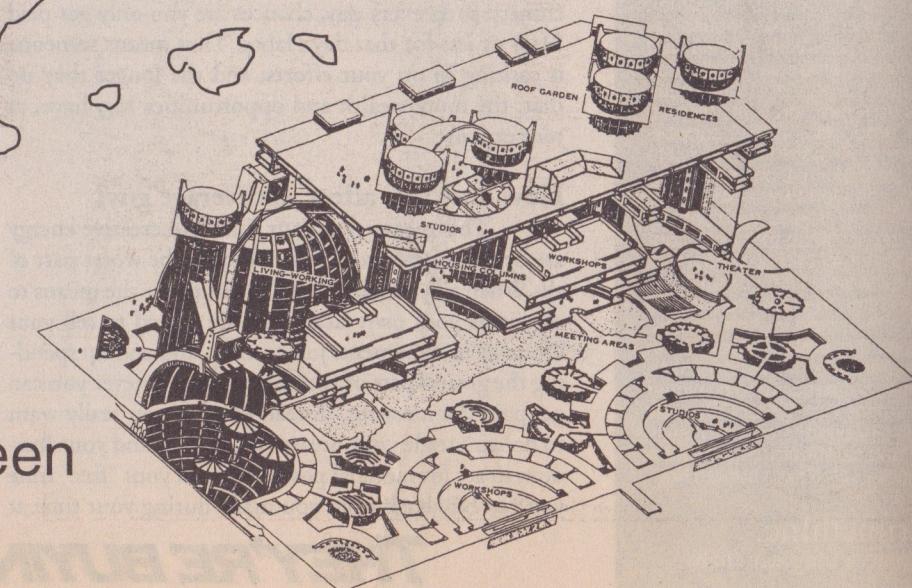
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6. I found my own voice

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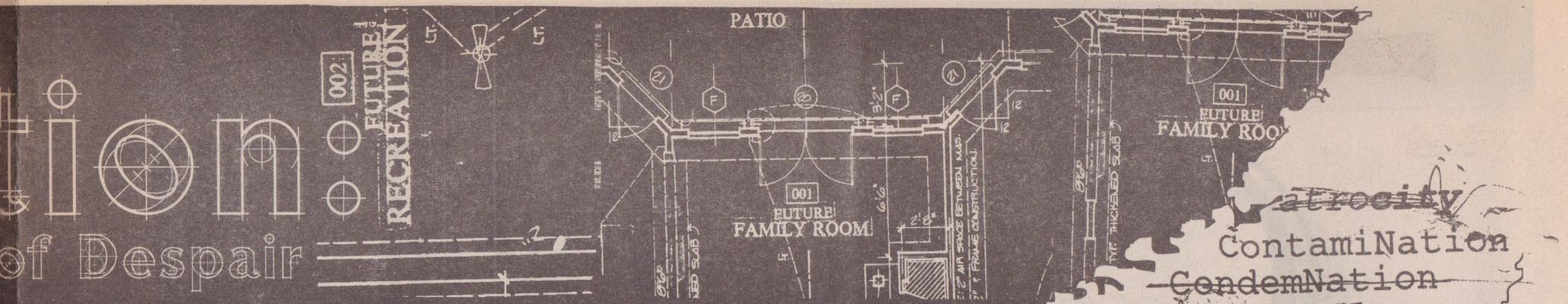
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rapid transit systems is that as the distance between  
een individuals *within* those communities widens.

And I sobbed o



## Space Travel, and Space Exploration

club) with a few links in between them (sitting in the car, standing in the subway, walking up the stairs) to encounter anything unexpected or discover any new places. A man could travel the freeways without seeing anything but asphalt and gas stations, so long as he stayed in his car. Locked onto our tracks, we could have free travel, voyages of discovery that would bring us into direct contact with brand new people and

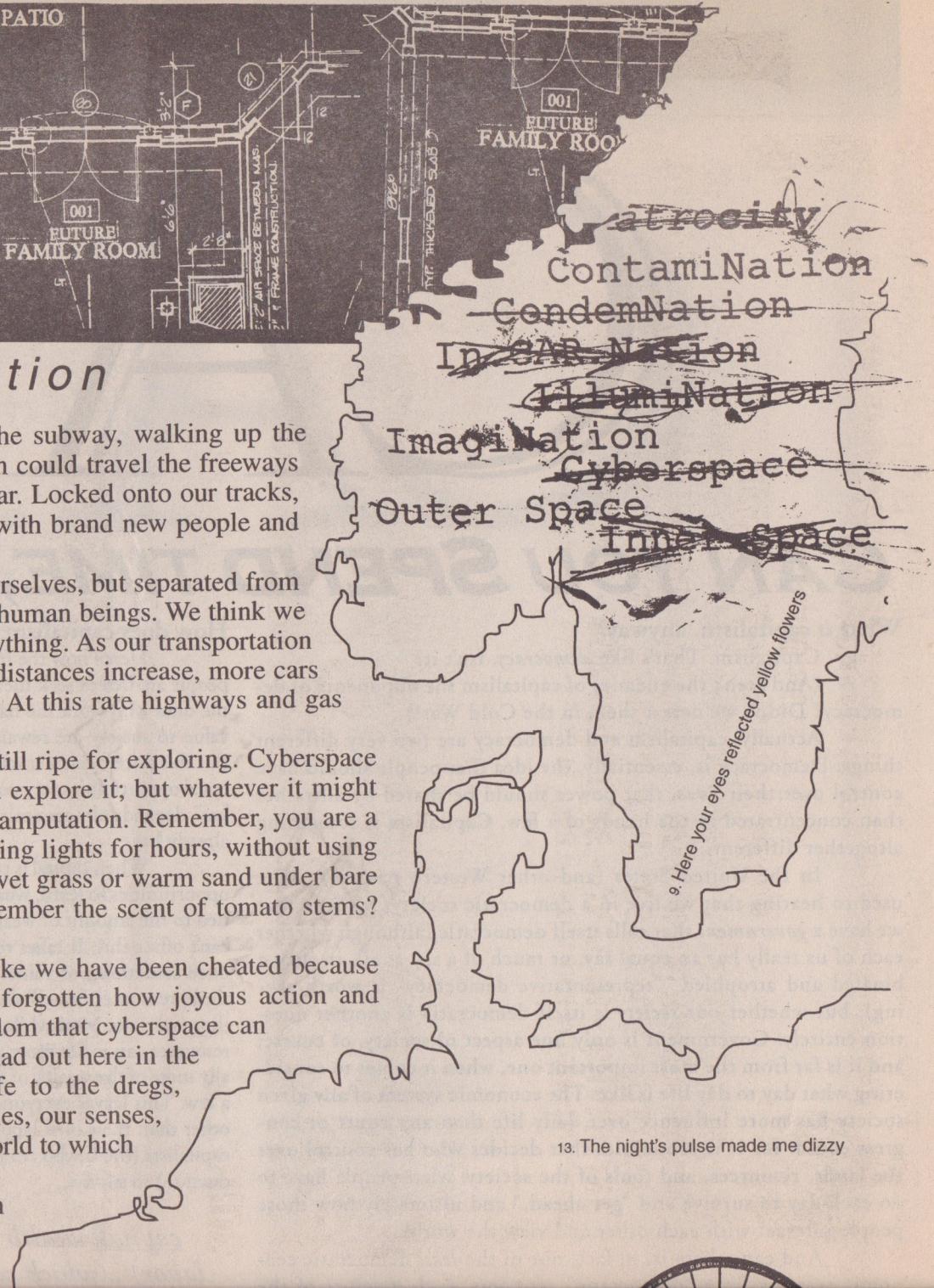
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13. The night's pulse made me dizzy

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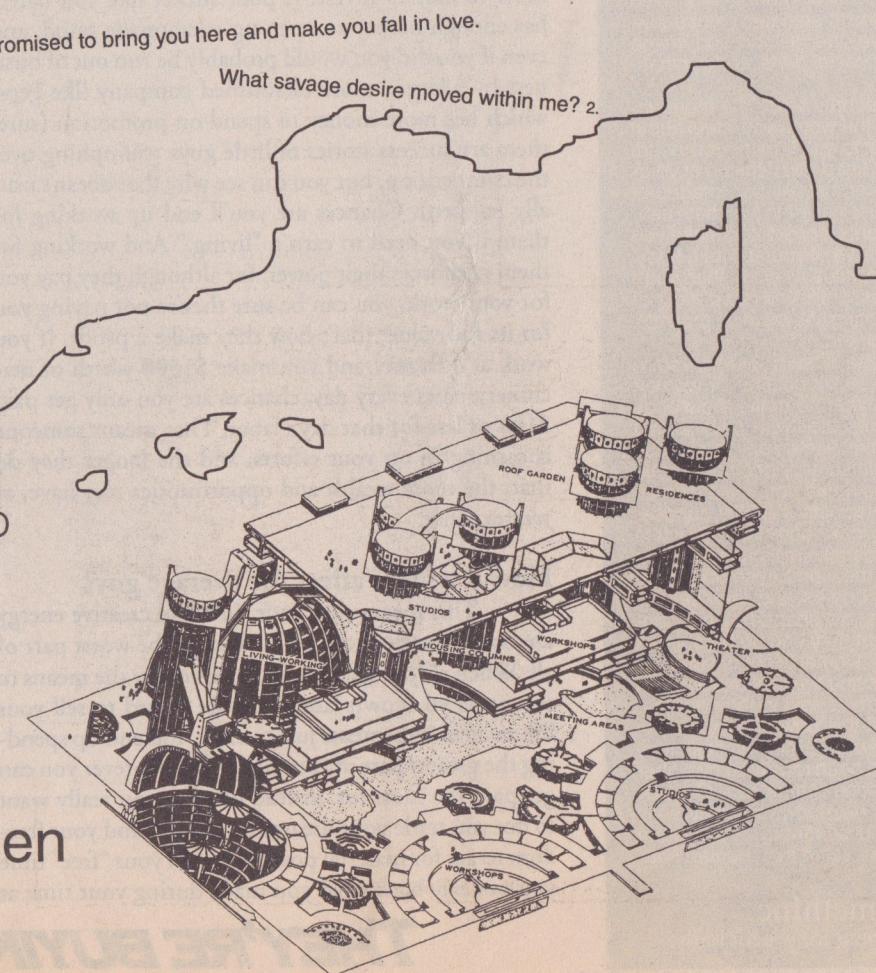
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And I sobbed on a foreign street for the loss of you. 14.

3. I promised to bring you here and make you fall in love.

What savage desire moved within me? 2.

12. And your hands on me here in that starry field.



W H A T ' S S O

# CAPITALISM

## CAN YOU SPEND TIME, LIKE MONEY?

### What is capitalism, anyway?

Capitalism. That's like *democracy*, isn't it?

(And aren't the enemies of capitalism the opponents of democracy? Didn't we defeat them in the Cold War?)

Actually, capitalism and democracy are two very different things. Democracy is, essentially, the idea that people should have control over their lives, that power should be shared by all rather than concentrated in the hands of a few. Capitalism is something altogether different.

In the United States (and other Western nations), we're used to hearing that we live in a democratic society. It's true that we have a *government* that calls itself democratic (although whether each of us really has an equal say, or much of a say at all, in such a bloated and atrophied "representative democracy" is worth asking), but whether our *society* is itself democratic is another question entirely. Government is only one aspect of society, of course; and it is far from the most important one, when it comes to considering what day to day life is like. The economic system of any given society has more influence over daily life than any court or congress could: for it is economics that decides who has control over the lands, resources, and tools of the society, what people have to do each day to survive and "get ahead," and ultimately how those people interact with each other and view the world.

And capitalism is, in fact, one of the *least* democratic eco-

### How does capitalism work?

Here's how the free market is *supposed* to work: people are free to seek their fortunes as they choose, and the ones who work the hardest and provide the greatest value to society are rewarded with the greatest wealth. But this system has a crucial flaw: it doesn't actually offer equal opportunities for everyone. Success in the "free market" depends almost entirely on how much wealth you already have.

When capital is privately owned, an individual's opportunities to learn, work, and earn wealth are directly tied to the amount of wealth she has. A few scholarships can't offset this. It takes resources of some kind to produce something of value, and if a person doesn't have those resources herself she finds she is at the mercy of those who do. Meanwhile, those who already have those resources can make more and more wealth, and eventually most of the wealth of the society ends up in hands of a few. This leaves everyone else with little capital to sell other than their own labor, which they must sell to the capitalists (those who control most of the means of production) to survive.

*capital: wealth (money, property, or labor) ... which can be used to create*

work (at a profit to your employers, of course); but you can never buy back the *time* you spent at work. That part of your life is gone and you have nothing to show for it but the bills you were able to pay. Eventually you start to think of your own creative abilities and labor power as beyond your control, for you come to associate doing anything but "relaxing" (recovering from work) with the misery of doing what you are *told* rather than what you want. The idea of acting on your own initiative and pursuing your own goals no longer occurs to you except when it comes to working on your hobbies.

Yes, there are a few people who find ways to get paid to do exactly what they've always wanted to. But how many of the working people you know fit into that category? These rare, lucky individuals are held up to us as proof that the system works, and we are exhorted to work really, really hard so that one day we can be as lucky as they are, too. The truth is that there are simply not enough job openings for everyone to be a rock star or syndicated cartoonist; somebody has to work in the factories to mass produce the records and newspapers. If you don't succeed in becoming the next world-famous basketball star, and end up selling athletic shoes in a mall instead, you must not have tried hard enough... so it's your fault if you're bored there, right? But it wasn't

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And capitalism is, in fact, one of the *least* democratic economic systems. In a "democratic" economy, each member of the society would have an equal say in how resources are used and how work is done. But in the capitalist economy, in which all resources are private property and everyone competes against each other to get them, most resources end up under the control of a few people (read: corporations). Those people can decide how everyone else will work, since most of the others can't live without earning money from them. They even get to determine the physical and psychological landscape of the society, since they own most of the land and control most of the media. And at bottom, *they* aren't really in control, either, for if they let their guard down and stop working to keep ahead they will quickly be at the bottom of the pyramid with everybody else; that means *nobody* truly has complete power over their lives under the capitalist system, for everyone is at the mercy of the laws of competition.

Nobody looks like this. It's not even healthy. But millions of women worldwide paint themselves, starve themselves, even have medical operations to live up to social standards of beauty. Who sets these standards? We do—we, the fashion and image industries, with our magazine covers, "miracle" diets, and synthetically engineered celebrities.

Why do we do this? First, insecurity sells. The more unreachable the standards we set for you, the worse you'll feel about yourselves, and the more of our products you'll think you need.

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**capital: wealth (money, property, or labor) ...which can be used to create more wealth. example: factory owners who profit from selling goods created by the labor of workers in their factories are able to purchase more factories.**

**capitalism: the "free exchange of goods and services" ...in which those who have capital are able to collect more, at the expense of those who do not.**

This sounds confusing, but it's actually pretty simple. A corporation like Nike has plenty of extra money to open up a new shoe factory, buy new advertisements, and sell more shoes, thus earning themselves more money to invest. A poor sucker like you barely has enough money to open up a lemonade stand, and even if you did you would probably be run out of business by a larger, more established company like Pepsi which has more money to spend on promotion (sure, there are success stories of little guys triumphing over the competition, but you can see why that doesn't usually happen). Chances are you'll end up working for

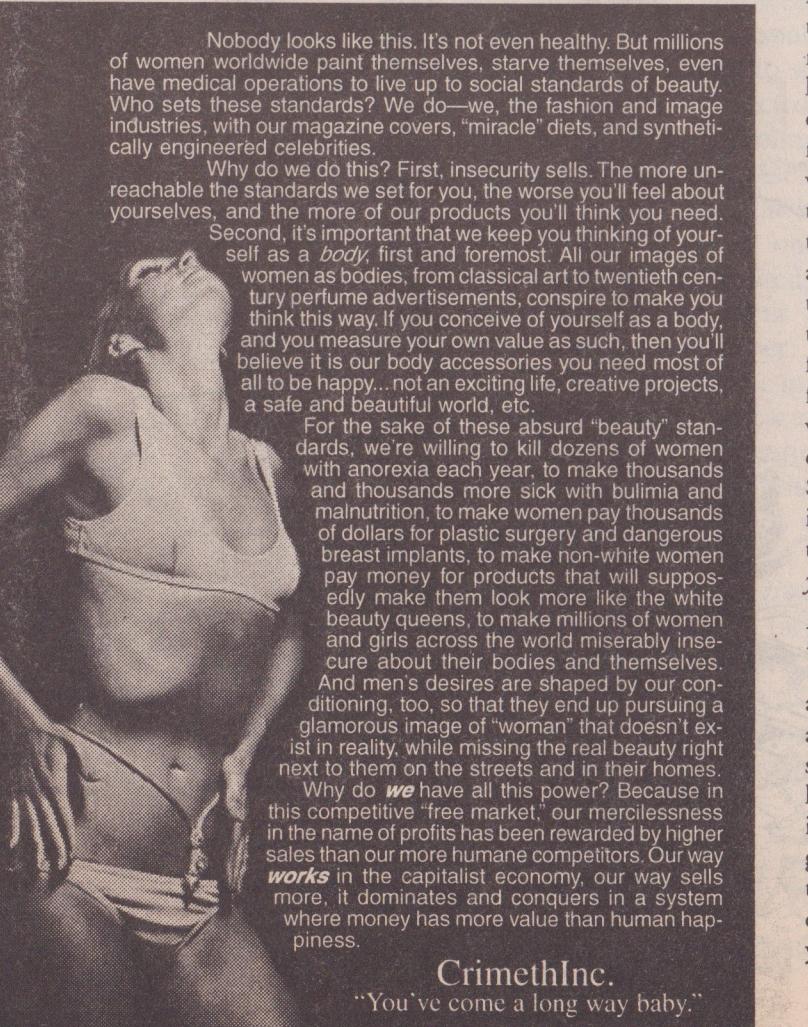
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## What does capitalism make people value?

As Jeanette says, under capitalism our lives end up revolving around *things*, as if happiness is to be found in possessions rather than in free actions and pursuits. Those who have wealth have it because they spend a lot of time and energy figuring out how to get it from other people. Those who have very little have to spend most of their lives working to get what they need to survive, and all they have as consolation for their lives of hard labor and poverty are the few things they are able to afford to buy--since their *lives* themselves have been bought from them. Between

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Second, it's important that we keep you thinking of yourself as a *body*, first and foremost. All our images of women as bodies, from classical art to twentieth century perfume advertisements, conspire to make you think this way. If you conceive of yourself as a body, and you measure your own value as such, then you'll believe it is our body accessories you need most of all to be happy...not an exciting life, creative projects, a safe and beautiful world, etc.

For the sake of these absurd "beauty" standards, we're willing to kill dozens of women with anorexia each year, to make thousands and thousands more sick with bulimia and malnutrition, to make women pay thousands of dollars for plastic surgery and dangerous breast implants, to make non-white women pay money for products that will supposedly make them look more like the white beauty queens, to make millions of women and girls across the world miserably insecure about their bodies and themselves. And men's desires are shaped by our conditioning, too, so that they end up pursuing a glamorous image of "woman" that doesn't exist in reality, while missing the real beauty right next to them on the streets and in their homes.

Why do *we* have all this power? Because in this competitive "free market," our mercilessness in the name of profits has been rewarded by higher sales than our more humane competitors. Our way **works** in the capitalist economy, our way sells more, it dominates and conquers in a system where money has more value than human happiness.

**CrimethInc.**  
"You've come a long way baby."

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This sounds confusing, but it's actually pretty simple. A corporation like Nike has plenty of extra money to open up a new shoe factory, buy new advertisements, and sell more shoes, thus earning themselves more money to invest. A poor sucker like you barely has enough money to open up a lemonade stand, and even if you did you would probably be run out of business by a larger, more established company like Pepsi which has more money to spend on promotion (sure, there are success stories of little guys triumphing over the competition, but you can see why that doesn't usually happen). Chances are you'll end up working for them if you need to earn a "living." And working for them reinforces their power: for although they pay you for your work, you can be sure they're not paying you for its full value: that's how they make a profit. If you work at a factory and you make \$1000 worth of machinery parts every day, chances are you only get paid \$100 or less for that day's labor. That means someone is cashing in on your efforts; and the longer they do that, the more wealth and opportunities *they* have, at *your* expense.

### How does this affect the average guy?

This means that your time and creative energy are being bought from you, which is the worst part of all. When all you have to sell in return for the means to survive is your own labor, you are forced to sell your life away in increments just to exist. You end up spending the greater part of your life doing whatever you can get paid the most for, instead of what you really want to do: you trade your dreams for salaries and your freedom to act for material possessions. In your "free" time you can buy back what you made during your time at

only be blamed for accepting a situation that offers such poor odds. Rather than all competing to be the one at the top of the corporate ladder or the one in a million lottery winner, we should be trying to figure out how to make it possible for *all of us* to do what we want with our lives. For even if you are lucky enough to come out on top, what about the thousands and thousands who didn't make it--the unhappy office clerks, the failed artists, listless grill cooks and fed up hotel maids? Is it in *your* best interest to live in a world filled with people who aren't happy, who never got to chase their dreams... who maybe never even got to have dreams?

### What does capitalism make people value?

As Jeanette says, under capitalism our lives end up revolving around *things*, as if happiness is to be found in possessions rather than in free actions and pursuits. Those who have wealth have it because they spend a lot of time and energy figuring out how to get it from other people. Those who have very little have to spend most of their lives working to get what they need to survive, and all they have as consolation for their lives of hard labor and poverty are the few things they are able to afford to buy--since their *lives* themselves have been bought from them. Between those two social classes are the members of the middle class, who have been bombarded from birth with advertisements and other propaganda proclaiming that happiness, youth, meaning, and everything else in life are to be found in possessions and status symbols. They learn to spend their lives working hard to collect these, rather than taking advantage of whatever chances they might have to seek adventure and pleasure.

Thus capitalism centers everyone's values around what they *have* rather than what they *do*, by making them spend their lives competing for the things they need to survive and achieve social standing. People might be more likely to find happiness in a society that encouraged them to value their ability to act freely and do what they want above all else. To create such a society, we will have to stop competing for control and wealth, and start to share them more freely; only then will everyone be completely free to choose the lives they most want to live, without fear of going hungry or being shut out of society.

**THEY'RE BUYING YOUR HAPPINESS**

\$ B A D S \$ \$ A \$ B S O \$ S U T S \$ \$ \$

# ALISM?

**"But doesn't competition lead to productivity?"**

Yes--that's the problem. The competitive "free market" economy not only encourages productivity at all costs, it *enforces* it: for those who do not stay ahead of the competition are trodden under it. And what costs, exactly, are we talking about here? For one thing, there are the long hours we spend at work: forty, fifty, sometimes even sixty hours a week, at the beck and call of bosses and/or customers, working until we're well past exhausted in the race to "get ahead." On top of this, there are the low wages we're paid: most of us aren't paid nearly enough to afford a share of all the things our society has to offer, even though it is our labor that makes them possible. This is because in the competitive market, workers aren't paid what they "deserve" for their labor--they're paid the *smallest* amount their employer can pay without them leaving to look for better wages. That's the "law" of supply and demand. The employer has to do this, because he needs to save as much extra capital as he can for advertising, corporate expansion, and other ways to try to keep ahead of the competition. Otherwise, he might not be an employer for long, and his employees will end up working for a more "competitive" master.

There's a word for those long hours and unfair wages: exploitation. But that's not the only cost of the "productivity" our competitive system encourages. Employers have to cut corners in a thousand other ways, too: that's why our work environments are often unsafe,

stereos break down after a few years. We don't get the products that are most relevant to our lives and pursuit of happiness, either: we get the products that are easiest and most profitable to sell. We get credit card companies, telemarketers, junk mail, cigarettes carefully designed to contain eight different addictive chemicals. In order that one company may outsell its competitors, we end up spending *our* lives working to develop, mass-produce, and purchase things like garbage disposal units, conveniences that raise our standard of survival without actually improving our quality of life. Much more than better blenders or video games or potato chips, we need more *meaning* and *pleasure* in our lives, but we're all so busy competing that we don't even have time to think about it.

*Competition means that we don't get to come together as a group and decide what would best for ourselves and the world; nor do we get to decide those things as individuals.*

*Instead, the projects our species undertakes and the changes we make in the world are decided by the laws of competition, by whatever SELLS*

successful not at offering something of value to society, but at promoting their product. Coke is not the best tasting beverage the world has ever tasted--it is simply the most mercilessly marketed. The ones who are most successful at creating an environment that keeps us buying from them, whether that means manipulating us with ad campaigns or using more devious means, are the ones who get the most resources to keep doing what they are doing; and thus, they are the ones who get the most power over the environments we live in. That's why our cities are filled with billboards and corporate skyscrapers, rather than artwork, public gardens, or bathhouses. That's why our newspapers and television programs are filled with slanted perspectives and outright lies: the producers are at the mercy of their advertisers, and the advertisers they depend on most are the ones who have the most money: the ones who are willing to do anything, even twist facts and spread falsehoods, to get and keep that money. (Do a little research and you'll see just how often this happens.) Capitalism virtually guarantees that the ones who control what goes on in society are the greediest, the cruelest, the most heartless.

And since everyone else is at their mercy, and no one wants to end up on the losing side, everyone is encouraged to be greedy, cruel, and heartless. Of course, no one is selfish or hard-hearted all the time. Very few people *want* to be, or get much pleasure out of it, and whenever they can avoid it they do. But the average work environment is set up to *make* people cold and impersonal to each other. If somebody comes into a bagel shop starving and penniless, company policy usually requires the employees to send him away empty handed rather than letting anyone have anything without paying--even if the bagel shop throws away dozens of bagels at the end of each day, as most do. The poor employees come to regard the starving people as a nuisance, and the starving people blame the employees for not helping them, when really it is

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This isn't limited to our own countries and cultures, of course. Capitalism and its values have spread across the world like a disease. Competing companies have to keep increasing their markets to keep up with each other, whether by persuasion or by force; that's why you can buy a Coke in Egypt and eat at McDonalds in Thailand. Throughout history we can see examples of how capitalist corporations have forced their way into one country after another, not hesitating to use violence where they deemed it necessary. Today, human beings in almost every corner of the world sell their labor to multinational corporations, often for less than a dollar an hour, in ways that the workers themselves can

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Surely in a less competitive society, we could still produce all the things we need, without being forced to produce all the frivolous extra stuff that is presently filling up our landfills. And maybe then we could concentrate our efforts on learning how to produce the most important thing of all: human happiness.

*Don't tell me life would be better and more free in a system like the Soviet Union had!*

No, of course not. The Soviet Union's economy was no more democratic than the United States' economy is. In the United States, most capital is controlled by corporations, which, in turn, are able to exert control over the lives of their employees (and, to some extent, their customers and everyone else). In the Soviet Union, most capital was controlled by only *one* force, the government, which put everyone else at its mercy. And although there was no internal competition of the sort that drives Western corporations to such extremes of ruthlessness, the Soviet government still sought to compete against other nations in economic power and productivity. This drove them to the same extremes of ecological devastation and worker exploitation that are common in the West. In both systems you can see the disastrous results of putting most wealth in the hands of a few people. What we need to try now is a system in which we can *all* have a share of the wealth of our society and a say in how we live and work.

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Those who dare to spend their lives doing things that are not profitable generally get neither security nor status for their efforts. They may be doing things of great value to society, such as making art or music or doing social work. But if they can't turn a profit from these activities, they will have a hard time surviving, let alone gathering the resources to expand their projects; and, since power comes first and foremost from wealth, they will have little control over what goes on in their society, as well. Thus, corporations that have no goals other than gathering more wealth and power for themselves *always* end up with more power over what goes on in a capitalist society than artists or social activists do. And at the same time, few people can afford to spend much time doing things that are worthwhile but not lucrative. You can imagine what sort of effects this has.

## YOU ARE A TARGET AUDIENCE

Youth is a time when you should be re-evaluating the assumptions and traditions of older generations, when you should be willing to set yourself apart from those who have come before and create an identity of your own.

But in our society, "youthful rebellion" has become a ritual: every generation is expected to revolt against the social order for a few years, before "growing up" and "accepting reality." This negates any power for real change that the fresh perspective of youth could have for now rebellion is

cally destructive to make money and stay productive, an economic system that rewards productivity above all else gives corporations no reason to resist trampling over wildlife and wilderness to make a buck. That's where our forests went, that's where the ozone layer went, that's where hundreds of species of wild animals went: they were burned up in our rat race. In place of forests, we now have shopping malls and gas stations, not to mention air pollution, because it's more important to have places to buy and sell than it is to preserve environments of peace and beauty. In place of buffalo and bald eagles, we have animals locked in factory farms, turned into milk and meat machines... and singing cartoon animals in Disney movies, the closest thing to wild animals some of us ever see. Our competitive economic system forces us to replace everything free and beautiful with the efficient, the uniform, the profitable.

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So—what kind of productivity does competition encourage? It encourages material productivity alone—that is, profit at any expense. We don't get higher *quality* products, for it is in the manufacturers' best interest that we return to buy from them again when our cars and

the most.

Surely in a less competitive society, we could still produce all the things we need, without being forced to produce all the frivolous extra stuff that is presently filling up our landfills. And maybe then we could concentrate our efforts on learning how to produce the most important thing of all: human happiness.

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### *So... who exactly is it that gets power under capitalism?*

In a system where people compete for wealth and the power that comes with it, the ones who are the most ruthless in their pursuit are the ones who end up with the most of both, of course. Thus the capitalist system *encourages* deceit, exploitation, and cutthroat competition, and rewards those who go to those lengths by giving them the most power and the greatest say in what goes on in society.

The corporations who do the best job of convincing us that we need their products, whether we do or not, are the most successful. That's how a company like Coca-Cola, which makes one of the most practically useless products on the market, was able to attain such a position of wealth and power: they were the most

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This arrangement is very much to the advantage of certain corporations who depend on the "youth market." Where is your money going when you buy that compact disc, that chain wallet, that hair dye, leather jacket, wall hanging, all those other accessories that identify you as a rebellious young person? Right to the companies that make up the order you want to stand against. They cash in on your rebellious impulses by selling you symbols of rebellion that actually just keep the wheels turning. You keep their pockets full, and they keep yours empty; they keep you powerless, busy just trying to afford to fit the molds they set for you.

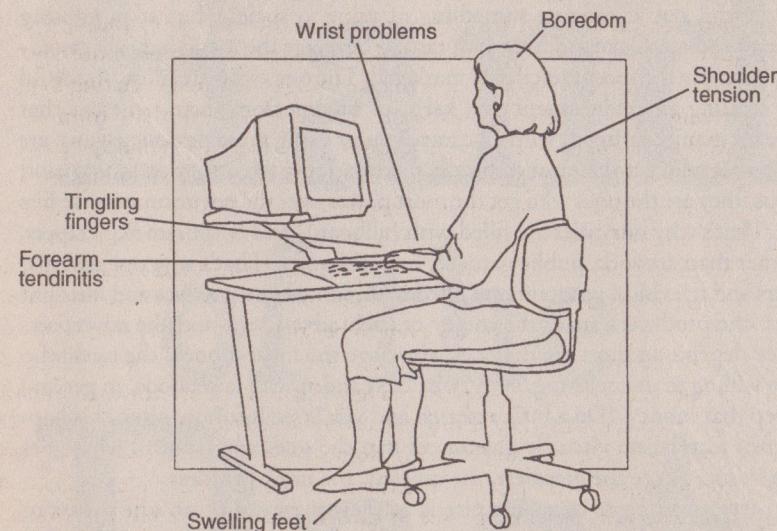
CrimethInc.

"The opium of a new generation."

**FROM YOU—STEAL IT BACK!**

# WHAT'S SO BAD

## RELATIONSHIPS OF FORCE VS. RELATIONSHIPS OF LOVE EXCHANGE ECONOMIES VS. GIFT ECONOMIES



What kind of place does this make our world?

The capitalist system gives the average person very little control over the collective capabilities and technologies of her society, and very little say in their deployment. Even though it is her labor (and that of people like her) that has made possible the construction of the world she lives in, she feels as though that labor, her own potential and the potential of her fellow human beings, is foreign to her, outside her control, something that acts upon the world regardless of her will. Small wonder if she feels frustrated, power-

conditioned to collect, only because they know that the alternative is starvation and ostracism. They may like some of the things they do at their jobs, but they would much rather do these things on their own time and in their own way--and do other things, besides, that their jobs leave them no time or energy for. To force the maximum productivity out of people who would rather be elsewhere, corporations use a thousand mechanisms of control: they schedule work hours for their employees, make them punch timeclocks, keep them under constant observation. Bosses and workers are brought together under mutual economic duress, and they negotiate with each other under invisible threats: the one pointing the gun of unemployment and poverty to the other's head, the other threatening poor service and, possibly, strikes. Most people try to maintain some concern for the human needs of others, even on the job; but the essence of our economy is competition and domination, and that always comes out in our relationships to those above and below us in the work hierarchy.

Can you imagine how much more advantageous, and how much more *fun*, it could be for all of us if we were able to act out of love,

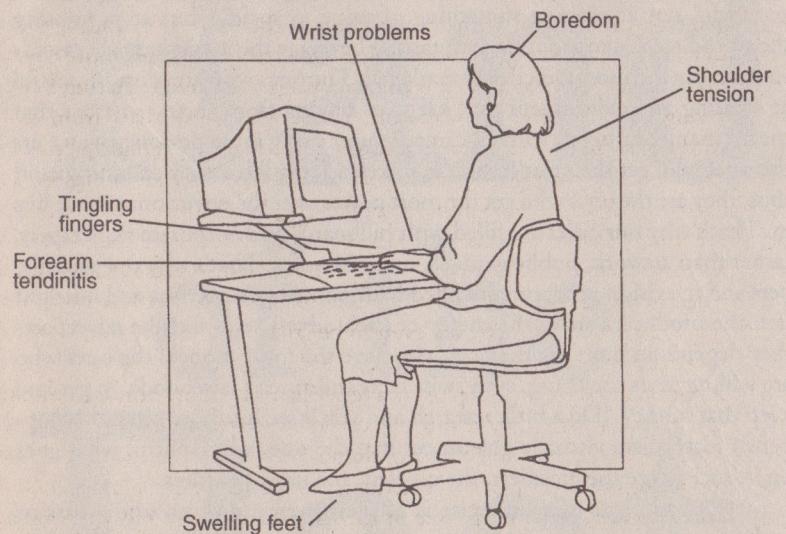
Enough abstractions! Let's talk about real life!

How does it feel to never be treated like an adult? To never be free of rules and regulations put upon you "for your own good," to have to obey and grovel before teachers, bosses, policemen--because they serve masters who have more money and power over your life than you can ever hope to achieve? To have to beg and scheme and lie for an afternoon "off" to do what you want, for once? To answer to automated bells, to be at the mercy of machines and clocks and people with half your brains and personality, to be dressed in matching uniforms like identical bags of potato chips? To be required to recite standard phrases over and over all day--to be programmed like a machine?

Do you think it's really a coincidence that Coca-Cola is now sold on every corner of the earth? Do you really trust them to have all that power, to make this planet a place you want to live?

Every time I get home to find my mailbox filled with junk mail, every time I try to eat a quiet dinner with my girlfriend and we get interrupted by a phone call from a telemarketing company, I'm reminded that I live in a society that values sales more than privacy. Every time someone has a television on and a barrage of commercials assaults us, I remember how

# EXCHANGE ECONOMIES VS. GIFT ECONOMIES



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Violence is not only present when human beings do physical harm to each other. Violence is there, albeit in a subtler form, whenever they use force upon each other in their interactions. It is violence that is at the root of capitalism. Under the capitalist system, all the economic laws governing human life come down to coercion: *Work or go hungry! Dominate or be dominated! Compete or perish! Sell the hours of your life away for the means to survive, or rot in poverty--or jail!*

Most people go to work because they have to, not because they want to. They sell their time to buy food and shelter, and to pay the bills for all the status symbols and luxuries they have been

conditioned to collect, only because they know that the alternative is starvation and ostracism. They may like some of the things they do at their jobs, but they would much rather do these things on their own time and in their own way--and do other things, besides, that their jobs leave them no time or energy for. To force the maximum productivity out of people who would rather be elsewhere, corporations use a thousand mechanisms of control: they schedule work hours for their employees, make them punch timeclocks, keep them under constant observation. Bosses and workers are brought together under mutual economic duress, and they negotiate with each other under invisible threats: the one pointing the gun of unemployment and poverty to the other's head, the other threatening poor service and, possibly, strikes. Most people try to maintain some concern for the human needs of others, even on the job; but the essence of our economy is competition and domination, and that always comes out in our relationships to those above and below us in the work hierarchy.

Can you imagine how much more advantageous, and how much more *fun*, it could be for all of us if we were able to act out of love, rather than compulsion? If we did things for the sheer joy of doing them, and worked together because we *wanted* to, not because we *had* to? Wouldn't that make it more enjoyable to do the things that are necessary for survival--and to be around each other, for that matter?

For these patterns of violence inevitably spill over into the rest of our lives, too. When you're used to regarding people as objects, as resources to be spent or enemies to be feared and fought, it's hard to leave those values behind you when you come home. The hierarchy that private ownership imposes upon relationships in the workplace can be found everywhere else in society: in schools, in churches, in families and in friendships, everywhere the dynamics of domination and submission take place. It's almost impossible to imagine what a truly equal relationship could consist of, in a society where everyone is always jockeying for superiority: white over black, men over women, age over youth,

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How does it feel to never be treated like an adult? To never be free of rules and regulations put upon you "for your own good," to have to obey and grovel before teachers, bosses, policemen--because they serve masters who have more money and power over your life than you can ever hope to achieve? To have to beg and scheme and lie for an afternoon "off" to do what you want, for once? To answer to automated bells, to be at the mercy of machines and clocks and people with half your brains and personality, to be dressed in matching uniforms like identical bags of potato chips? To be required to recite standard phrases over and over all day--to be programmed like a machine?

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And when bills come due, I'm reminded again of what counts in this golden age. I have to pay the rent at the beginning of the month, *before* I've stayed in the apartment for one night, but I don't get paid until at least three weeks *after* my work week begins--because the people who control the property I live on, and the workplace I have to serve in, have slanted everything in their favor. From the beginning of the work week until the moment I cash my paycheck weeks later, they get an "interest free loan"

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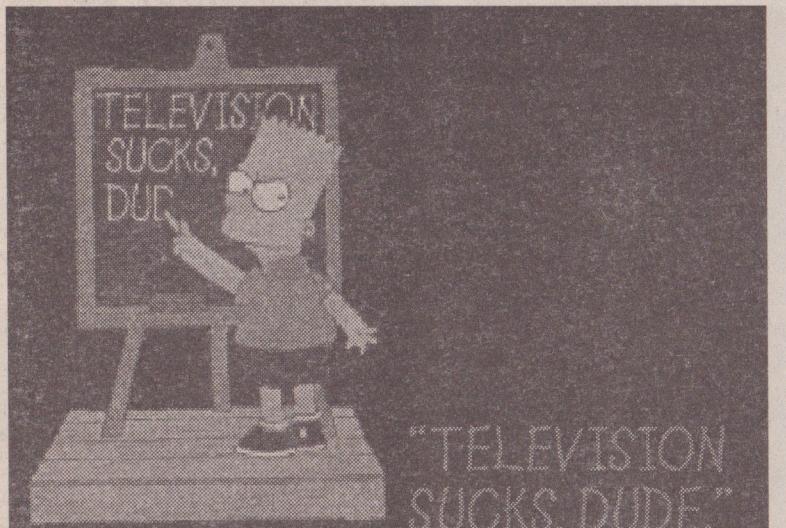
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If we lived in a world where we could pursue whatever aspirations we pleased, without fear of dying hungry, crazy, and unloved like Van Gogh and a thousand others, our lives and relationships would no longer be molded by violence. Perhaps then it would be easier for us to look at each other and see what is beautiful and unique, to look at nature and appreciate it for what it is... to be and let be rather than always seeking power and advantage. There have been hundreds of other societies in the history of our species in which people have lived that way. Is it really too much to think that we could reorganize our own society to be more democratic?



So, you've become dubious, cynical? You don't trust the government, Coca-Cola, television anymore? We're perfectly happy to parody ourselves, to insult ourselves, even to explain all of our ugly intentions and evil dealings in detail... as long as it keeps your attention. We have television shows, advertisements, and comic strips carefully designed for those of you who don't have confidence in us anymore. Anything to keep you *watching*, anything to keep you *buying*.

We play on your cynicism, cashing in on it, encouraging it. You may know better than to have any faith in us, but as long as we keep you captivated with our irony and self-deprecation, you won't be able to conceive of any alternatives. Rather than having the idealism to strike out against the status quo, you'll join the ranks of the *Dilbert* nihilists, no longer able to believe in anything, but still playing your part in the system of despair.

CrimethInc.

(you are a captive audience)



chants out to make a "killing." Every time I ride my bike, I pass billboards proclaiming the power and sex appeal of various trivial products, and it infuriates me to imagine all the better uses that public space could have been put to. If only there was a way for us to decide what goes up on our own streets, besides writing graffiti!

And when bills come due, I'm reminded again of what counts in this golden age. I have to pay the rent at the beginning of the month, *before* I've stayed in the apartment for one night, but I don't get paid until at least three weeks *after* my work week begins--because the people who control the property I live on, and the workplace I have to serve in, have slanted everything in their favor. From the beginning of the work week until the moment I cash my paycheck weeks later, they get an "interest free loan" in the form of my labor. And the landlord gets the same loan from me when I pay a month ahead for my lodgings! In the meantime, I have to be careful not to turn the heat up higher than I can afford, or eat more food than I can afford, or talk to my far-away friends on the phone longer than I can afford... and when I'm shivering, and my stomach is growling, and I feel lonely, I can't help but be furious that, though technologies are in place that could easily keep me as warm and well-fed as could be, I have to pay dearly for every crumb--so a few rich men can gather more wealth at my expense! I work forty hours a week for the system that makes all these amenities possible--do I not deserve to turn the heat up as high as my boss can, just because I get dirtier on the job? Do I not deserve to taste the food at the restaurants he frequents, just because I don't want to fight my way up the corporate ladder?

It's much worse for some of my friends: they have credit card bills and loans to pay off. Those corporations have control over them for life: no matter what they may want to do, next month or ten years from now, they will be at their mercy. That's a few extra hundred dollars a month most of them

# ABOUT CAPITALISM?

have to raise, and that means unless they're willing to declare bankruptcy they'll *never* be free of the compulsion to sell their lives away. It enrages me every time I receive another promotional credit card application in the mail, knowing that these motherfuckers will do anything to suck me in, to trap me in the indentured servitude of debt. And I wince whenever I see my friends buying more stuff, in empty attempts to console themselves: of course they're desperate for freedom and excitement, living the lives that they do, but they're not going to find any of those things in a stereo or a new jeep! Spending their money like that just keeps them chained tighter to the system that is stealing their lives from them. Some of them spend the whole year working, their hearts silent within their chests, to save up the money for a few weeks and weekends of hiking, skiing, canoeing--things that were once free for all of us, before the corporations we work for wrapped everything in concrete.

The alienation, distrust and exhaustion we all feel in this society multiply our needs, and we run to commodities (invested with fetishistic power as they are by advertisements) hoping they can save us. But purchasing them only perpetuates our misery. For every time you buy something in this system, you're buying the whole system: you're giving your money to the corporations to reinforce their power, and to get that money, you have to give your labor to them too. That's more labor for them to maintain "business as usual," and less freedom for

## OK, OK, but what's the alternative?

The alternative to capitalism would be a consensual society in which we could decide individually (and, where necessary, collectively) what our lives and surroundings would be, instead of being forced into them by so-called laws like "supply and demand." Those are only laws if we let them be. It's hard to imagine a society based on cooperation from this vantage point, since all any of us have ever seen in our lives is competition. But such societies are possible: they have existed over and over in the history of our species, and they can exist again, if we want.

To escape from the fetters of competition, we need to develop an economy that is based on giving rather than trading: a *gift economy*, in place of this exchange economy. In such a system, each person could do what she wanted to with her life, and offer to others what she felt most qualified to offer, without fear of going hungry. The means to do things would be shared by everyone rather than hoarded up by the greediest individuals, so each person would have all the capabilities of society at her disposal. Those who wanted to paint could paint, those who enjoy building engines and machines could do that, those who love bicycles could make and repair them for others. The so-called "dirty work" would be spread around more fairly, and everyone would benefit from being able to do a variety of things rather than being limited to one trade like a cog in a machine. "Work" itself would be a thousand times more pleasurable, without tight schedules or demanding bosses constraining us. And though we might have a slower rate of production, we would have a wider array of creative pursuits in our society, which could make life fuller and more meaningful for all of us... besides, do we really need all the trinkets and luxuries we slave so hard to make today?

This sounds like an utopian vision, and it is, but that doesn't mean that we can't make our lives a lot more like that than they are now. We don't have to look only to the bushmen of the Kalahari desert for examples of what life is like outside capitalism.

talist society is only one of a thousand ways that human beings have lived and interacted together, you can see that this talk of "human nature" is nonsense. We are formed first and foremost by the environments we grow up in--and human beings now have the power to construct our own environments. If we are ambitious enough, we can design our world to reconstruct us in any shape our hearts desire. Yes, all of us are haunted by feelings of greed and aggression, living as we do in a materialistic and violent world. But in more supportive environments, built on different values, we could learn to interact in ways that would bring more pleasure to all of us. Indeed, most of us would be far more generous and considerate today if we could be--it's hard to give gifts freely in a world where you have to sell a part of yourself away in order to get anything at all. Considering that, it's amazing how many gifts we still give each other.

The people who talk about "human nature" would tell us that this nature consists chiefly of the lust to possess and control. But what about our desires to share, and to act for the sheer sake of acting? Only those who have given up on *doing* what they want content themselves by finding meaning in what they merely have. Almost everyone knows that it is more rewarding to bring joy to others than it is to take things from them. Acting freely and giving freely are their own reward. Those who think that "from each according to her means, to each according to her needs" unfairly benefits the receivers have simply misunderstood what makes human beings happy.

It's tempting to think of capitalism as a conspiracy of the rich against everyone else, and to conceive of the struggle against capitalism as a struggle against them. But in truth, it is in *everyone's* best interest that we do away with this economic system. If true wealth consists of freedom and community, we are all poor here: for even to be "rich" in a society that is hostile to those things is only to possess the greatest amounts of poverty. This system is not the result of an evil plot by a few villains bent on world domination--and even if it was, they've only succeeded in condemning everyone, themselves included, to the shackles of domination and submission. Let's not be too jealous of them just because they seem better off from a distance. Anyone who has grown up in one of their households can tell you that for all their bank accounts and sprinkler systems, they're no happier or freer than you are. We should try to find ways to make *everyone* see what is to be gained from transforming our society, and to involve everyone in it.

If that's a difficult challenge, and it sometimes seems to you that "the masses" deserve what they get for accepting this way of life, don't lose heart. Remember, the system *they* accept is the one *you* live under. Your chances for liberation are inextricably tied to theirs.

But at the same time, keep in mind that the world isn't going to change overnight. That shouldn't be your chief motivation, anyway, should it? Serving the "cause" of a far off "world revolution" is still serving, after all. In leaving capitalism behind, we should also leave behind

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I've resolved to get the fuck out any way that I can. I'm going to stop working for them, stop paying for all their products, stop believing in all the myths about having the perfect home and the perfect car and "getting ahead" in the (aptly named) "work force." I'm going to create a life for myself that I want to live, that I can find joy in, or die trying. But even if I do escape, how can I live the life I yearn for if all the people I care about, all the people around me and the world I live in itself, remain under the power of this system? It will be just as lonely being free if everyone else is still locked inside the schools and offices and factories, following instructions. If I want to truly get out of here, I have to figure out how to take the others with me. I walk down the street, watching smog pour into the sky from smokestacks, and I ache for a world in which it is up to us whether the stacks ever smoke again.

And where are the pleasure gardens that could have been built with all this labor, or the woods to

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This sounds like an utopian vision, and it is, but that doesn't mean that we can't make our lives a lot more like that than they are now. We don't have to look only to the bushmen of the Kalahari desert for examples of what life is like outside capitalism, either: even today, there are plenty of opportunities in our own society to see how much better life is when nothing has a price. Whenever a group of friends gets together and freely shares food, entertainment, and emotional support, whenever people go camping together and divide up responsibilities, whenever people cooperate to cook or make music or do anything else for pleasure rather than money, that is the "gift economy" in action. One of the most exhilarating things about being in love or having a close friend is that, for once, you are valued for who you are, not what you're "worth." And what a wonderful feeling it is to enjoy things in life that come to you free, without having to measure how much of yourself you are exchanging for them! Even in this society, almost everything we derive real pleasure from comes from outside the confines of capitalist relations. And why shouldn't we demand *all* the time what works so well in our private lives? If we get so much more out of our relationships when they are free from the coercion of ownership and competition, why shouldn't we seek to free our "work relationships" from that coercion as well?

But who will collect the garbage, if we all do what we want? Well, when a group of friends live in an apartment together, doesn't the garbage get taken out? It might not get taken out as regularly as it would by the

corporations, but it will get taken out. And the joy to bring joy to others than it is to take things from them. Acting freely and giving freely are their own reward. Those who think that "from each according to her means, to each according to her needs" unfairly benefits the receivers have simply misunderstood what makes human beings happy.

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If that's a difficult challenge, and it sometimes seems to you that "the masses" deserve what they get for accepting this way of life, don't lose heart. Remember, the system *they* accept is the one *you* live under. Your chances for liberation are inextricably tied to theirs.

But at the same time, keep in mind that the world isn't going to change overnight. That shouldn't be your chief motivation, anyway, should it? Serving the "cause" of a far off "world revolution" is still serving, after all. In leaving capitalism behind, we should also leave behind every other master or ideology that would demand we sacrifice ourselves: for *we ourselves* must be the cause, from now on! As our time on this planet is limited, we cannot wait on the "revolution" or anything else to begin the pursuit of our dreams and desires. Our goal is the improvement of our lives, anyway, nothing more or less, so let's keep perspective: any freedom for any one of us, even if only for an hour, is something!

Don't be paralyzed by the seeming vastness of the forces arrayed against us, or be tricked into serving other forces against them. Find ways to escape from the system of violence in your own life, and take others with you when you can. Any moment the chance comes to seize any part of your life back, take it! We can make this place a heaven on earth if we are more demanding and more generous, more courageous and more honest than anyone has dared be before.

text assisted by Harpo and Groucho Marx

## OMNIPRESENCE

*Is Our Selling Point*

You see our insignia everywhere you go. It is on your clothes,

on your television screen, on the walls of every street, in the pages of every magazine. It is branded upon your mind. You see it a thousand

I've resolved to get the fuck out any way that I can. I'm going to stop working for them, stop paying for all their products, stop believing in all the myths about having the perfect home and the perfect car and "getting ahead" in the (aptly named) "work force." I'm going to create a life for myself that I want to live, that I can find joy in, or die trying. But even if I do escape, how can I live the life I yearn for if all the people I care about, all the people around me and the world I live in itself, remain under the power of this system? It will be just as lonely being free if everyone else is still locked inside the schools and offices and factories, following instructions. If I want to truly get out of here, I have to figure out how to take the others with me. I walk down the street, watching smog pour into the sky from smokestacks, and I ache for a world in which it is up to us whether the stacks ever smoke again.

And where are the pleasure gardens that could have been built with all this labor, or the woods to wander through, the rivers to drink from, the lakes to swim in? Where are the eagles and moose to admire, or the stars in the light- and air-polluted night sky, for that matter? In my daydreams, I travel through beautiful wilderlands, meeting people who have unique customs and ways of life, who never heard of Pepsi, who never spent a day doing anything but what they please. Together we concoct wild schemes of how to wrest the most pleasure out of life, how to squeeze it to the very last drop... and we roll all our desires and fantasies together into one great ball, with which to smash open the gates to paradise itself.

-guest testimony by Lucy Strie.

We can provide you with a great deal of information about how to quit your job and live outside the system. If you're interested, write to the CrimethInc. address.

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*But who will collect the garbage, if we all do what we want?* Well, when a group of friends live in an apartment together, doesn't the garbage get taken out? It might not get taken out as regularly as it would by the janitor at an office, but it gets taken out *voluntarily*, and it isn't always the same guy stuck doing it. To suggest that we can't provide for our own needs without authority forcing us to is to vastly underestimate and insult our species. The idea that we would all sit around doing nothing if we didn't have to work for bosses to survive comes from the fact that, since we *do* have to work for bosses to survive, we would all rather sit around doing nothing. But if we had our energy and our time to ourselves, we would quickly rediscover how to use them, for practical purposes as well as impractical: remember how many people enjoy gardening for its own sake, even when they don't have to do it to survive. Surely we wouldn't let ourselves starve to death in a society where we shared decisions and power rather than fighting over them... and the fact that so many people are starving *today* indicates that capitalism is no less impractical than any other system might be.

We're often told it is "human nature" to be greedy, and that this is why our world is the way it is. The very existence of other societies and other ways of life contradicts this. Once you realize that modern capi-

for *we ourselves* must be the cause, from now on! As our time on this planet is limited, we cannot wait on the "revolution" or anything else to begin the pursuit of our dreams and desires. Our goal is the improvement of our lives, anyway, nothing more or less, so let's keep perspective: any freedom for any one of us, even if only for an hour, is something!

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You see our insignia everywhere you go. It is on your clothes, on your television screen, on the walls of every street, in the pages of every magazine. It is branded upon your mind. You see it a thousand times more frequently than you see your nation's flag; you see it at least as often as you see your mother's face.

We don't invest in communication to inform you about our products; we aim to promote *ourselves*. That's why we give you slogans and symbols instead of facts. We're not sharing information so much as we are spreading *mystification*. We are the deities of the new age; you accept us as all-powerful and all-knowing because you see our power and our presence everywhere. Your friends work for us, your smaller companies are owned by us, your politicians answer to us, everything is sponsored by us or dictated by us. We seem to control everything, to stand over humanity like eternal gods.

When you purchase our products, it's not tennis shoes or jeans or soft drinks you are really after; it's that aura of power. To children in the ghettos of the United States, Nike represents the wealth and status they long for. To shoppers in Italy (who have a heritage of much healthier and tastier food), McDonalds symbolizes the modern age they so desperately want to participate in. We rule over you because we have persuaded you that we are divine.

But all gods have a secret vulnerability: we cease to exist when people no longer believe in us. We seem to be invulnerable, but we could be dispelled as absolutely as the gods of ancient Greece if you recognized us for the phantoms that we are. We work around the clock, filling the world with our temples and our images, because we know that one day humanity is bound to wake up from this long nightmare.

CrimethInc.

"Always."



# *There is a difference between Life & survival.*

Whatever medical science may profess, there is a difference between Life and survival. There is more to being *alive* than just having a heartbeat and brain activity. Being alive, really alive, is something much subtler and more magnificent. Their instruments measure blood pressure and temperature, but overlook joy, passion, love, all the things that make life really matter. To make our lives matter again, to really get the most out of them, we will have to redefine life itself. We have to dispense with their merely clinical definitions, in favor of ones which have more to do with what we actually feel.

As it stands, how much *living* do we have in our lives? How many mornings do you wake up feeling truly free, thrilled to be alive, breathlessly anticipating the experiences of a new day? How many nights do you fall asleep feeling fulfilled, going over the events of the past day with satisfaction? Most of us feel as though everything has already been decided without us, as if living is not a creative activity but rather something that happens *to* us. That's not being *alive*, that's just surviving: being undead. We have undertakers, but their services are not usually required; we have morgues, but we spend most of our time in office cubicles and video arcades, in shopping malls, in front of televisions. Of course suburban housewives and petty executives are terrified of risk and change; they can't imagine that there is anything more valuable than physical safety. Their hearts may be beating, but they no longer believe in their dreams, let alone chase after them.

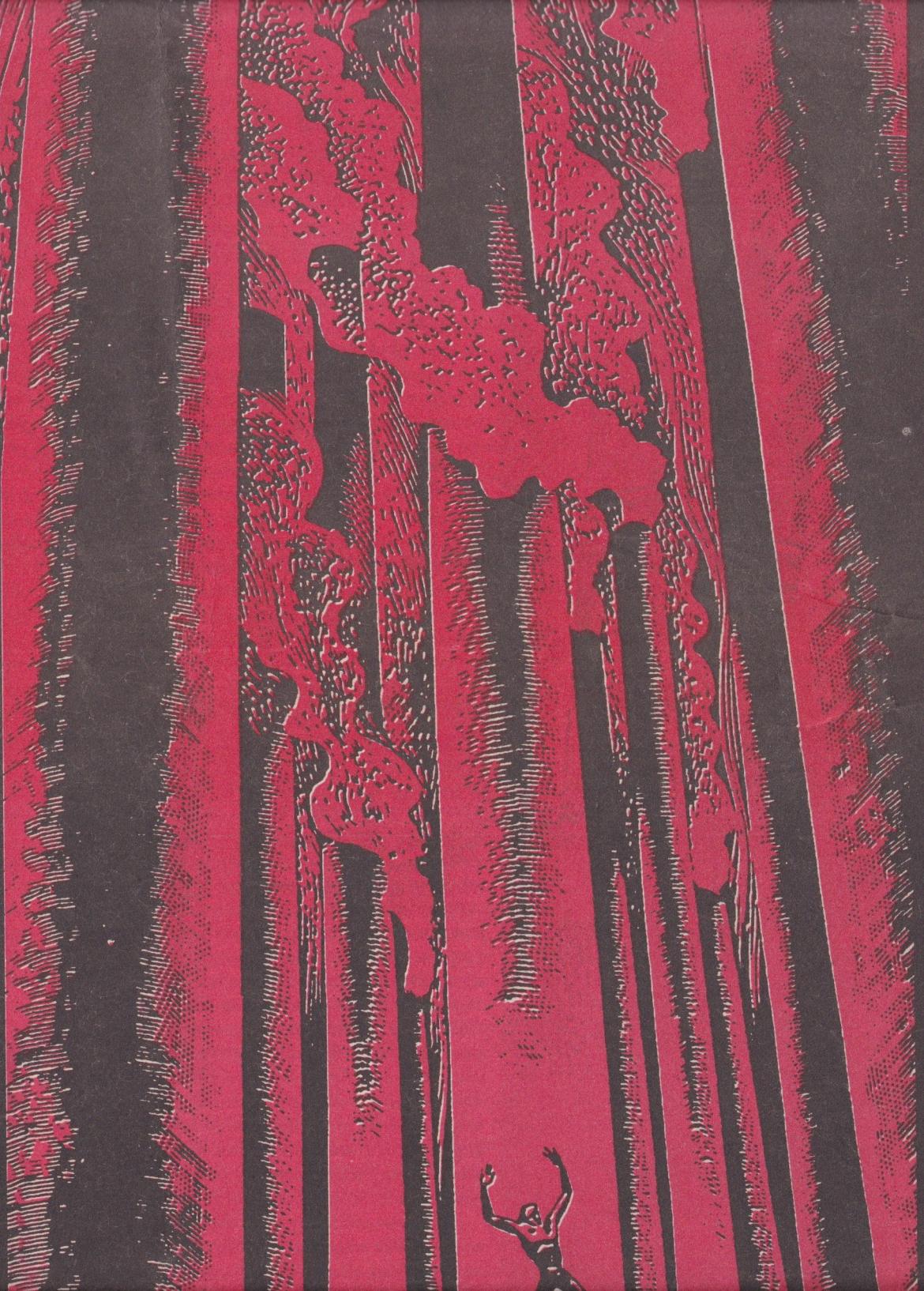


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But this is how the revolution begins: a few of us start chasing our dreams, breaking our old patterns, embracing what we love (and in the process discovering what we hate), daydreaming, questioning, acting outside the boundaries of routine and regularity. Others see us doing this, see people daring to be more creative and more adventurous, more generous and more ambitious than they had imagined possible, and join us one by one. Once enough people embrace this new way of living, a point of critical mass is finally reached, and society itself begins to change. From that moment, the world will start to undergo a transformation: from the frightening, alien place that it is, into a place ripe with possibility, where our lives are in our own hands and any dream can come true.

So do what you want with your life, whatever it is! But to be sure you do get what you want, think carefully about what it really is, first, and how to go about getting it. Analyze the world around you, so you'll know which people and forces are working against your desires, and which ones are on your side... and how you can work together with us. We're out here, living life to the fullest, waiting for you--hopping trains across the United States, organizing political protests in French public schools, writing beautiful letters at sunrise in Bangkok. We just finished making love in the corpo-



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And Life is waiting for you with us, on the peaks of unclimbed mountains, in the smoke of campfires and burning buildings, in the arms of lovers who will turn your world upside down. Come join us!

*Harbinger is distributed free throughout the world. It is printed in a number of languages and nations. Funding for this project is raised in a variety of ways, unfortunately including advertising sales. We are aware of the contradictions in printing advertisements in a publication like this; but we accept that hypocrisy is almost inevitable in any resistance to the all-pervading capitalist system, and so we will embrace it when we must, rather than choosing paralysis.*

*First and last, it is of the utmost importance to us that Harbinger is available to readers at no cost. Selling ideas, even the most radical of ideas, is still, at bottom, **selling**--with all of the drawbacks that entails: the ideas are only available to people with certain means, they become a commodity to be purchased passively rather than shared actively, and they become a product which must be marketed by the producers. In this way, radical ideas can actually end up as a catalyst for **more** buying and selling, **more** capitalism, rather than less.*

*There is an enormous "discontent industry" that cashes in on our misery by selling us products that describe and explain it--in this way, the supposed opponents of the capitalist economy eventually take roles of their own in it. But if we are to really change our world and better our lives, we must somehow find ways to go beyond the buyer-seller relationship in our actions as well as our theory. Harbinger is one of our attempts to do this. Please accept it as our gift to you!*

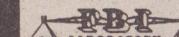


## Buried Alive..... But Alive, All the Same!

**Harbinger:**  
*Leaving the Fiftieth Century*  
**CrimethInc.**

a product of the CrimethInc. Workers' Collective

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# ideal.

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Transformation begins: a few of us are breaking our old patterns, in the process discovering, questioning, acting more and more regularly. Others are daring to be more creative, more generous and more possible, and join us in embracing this new way of life. This is finally reached, and From that moment, the transformation: from the old, into a place ripe with possibility in our own hands and

with your life, whatever you want, think it first, and how to go around you, so you'll be working against your side... and how. We're out here, living life--hopping trains across borders, political protests in France, writing letters at sunrise in love in the corporations you walked in on your

with us, on the peaks of smoke of campfires

